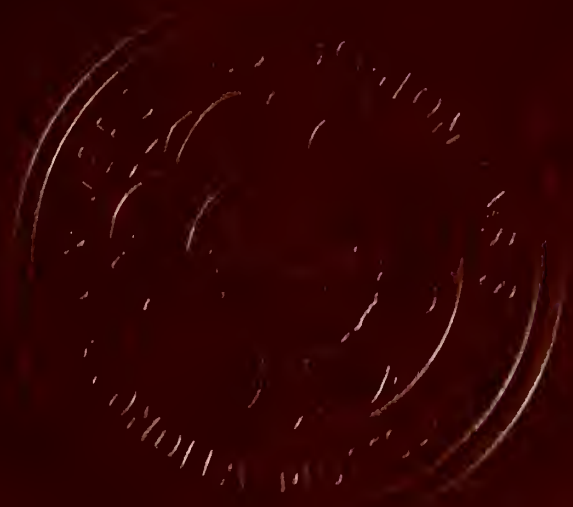
An Evaluation of Dostoevesky as a Psychological Novelist in the Light of English and American Fiction

by

Claire Wilson Wright



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AN EVALUATION OF DOSTOEVSKY AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVELIST IN THE LIGHT OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN FICTION

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by

Claire Wilson Wright

(A.B., Bates College, 1942)

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to make an evaluation of Dostoevsky as a "psychological" novelist. The standards for this evaluation, however, are determined by a general knowledge of English and American, rather than Russian, literature. Of Dostoevsky's works, only the novels which are most widely read in this country and a few shorter works will be considered.

The word "psychological", as used in this paper in reference to authors or works, denotes a degree of concern with mental problems or reactions. One novelist is "more psychological" than another in proportion as he interests himself and his reader more in the workings of the human mind.

CHAPTER I

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

Before any attempt can be made to find Dostoevsky's place among the psychological novelists of the English-speaking world, it is necessary to take a brief view of the part psychology has played in the English and American novel in the last two centuries. It also seems advisable to make a slightly more detailed observation of a few novelists who, for one reason or another, are open to comparison or contrast with Dostoevsky.

It takes no great amount of study or insight to see the vast difference between the external quality of Robinson Crusoe and the extremely internal quality of Joyce's Ulysses. The latter, of course, is not typical of the modern novel, but it serves to demonstrate the extreme of internal portrayal to which the modern writer can go. Between Defoe and Joyce lies a long and rocky, but none the less forward-moving, stream of novelists who contribute to this shift of emphasis.

Early eighteenth century fiction has as its mission the bringing about of moral reform, and as its appeal breath-taking adventure and the struggle of virtue to overcome evil. Defoe, the business-man novelist, is remarkable for his frankness in Moll Flanders, but even here his contribution

is rather to sociology than to psychology. Whether the moral was genuine or merely to save the author's face, a realistic picture is given of the business-like, "respectable" prostitute, but Moll as an individual is not distinctive. Robinson Crusoe as a character is even less remarkable; he has become important largely because of his unique adventure and the island on which he lived.

Richardson and Fielding set against each other furnish many contrasts; so Fielding certainly thought when he undertook to satirize the perfect Pamela in his Joseph Andrews. And perhaps Tom Jones, with his moral errors and flaws, is more human than Richardson's model of purity. However, from the modern point of view, Tom's character seems almost negligible beside the harrowing events of his life. The emphasis is no less on adventure and activity; Tom is important chiefly because he is a vehicle for his many thrilling experiences.

If a single author can be credited with diverging from the general tendency in the eighteenth century novel, it is probably Sterne, even though he has not survived so well in the popular mind as some of his predecessors. Tristam Shandy certainly is a far cry in methodology from the involved plot-novel of Richardson and Fielding. Is it going too far to say that Uncle Toby is the first real character in English fiction? His hobby-horses lift him definitely out of the category of a stereotyped good or bad figure. For the first time an author seems to have forgotten that his story must halt only for moral dissertations, and relies on the force

of his character creations to hold interest. The internal shift was probably no less startling to readers of the seventeen hundreds than was the experiment of James Joyce to the readers of the present century.

Toward the end of the Gothic rage in novels, emerged Jane Austen, reacting against these horror tales of Walpole and Anne Radcliffe, and building up the character predominance noticeable in Sterne. Jane Austen is no extreme revolutionist; she is conservative, conventional, extremely moral. Yet Emma is built around the character from which the book takes its name. No story would exist if another person were substituted for the main character, which substitution could more easily be made in Robinson Crusoe or Tom Jones.

By the time of the eighteen hundreds novel-writing had become more prevalent and characters were distinctly gaining recognition as groundwork for fiction. Thus selection becomes more difficult. A novelist who in the eighteenth century would be a landmark in technique or penetration of character portrayal is in the ninteenth century lost among more outstanding writers.

Henry James, perhaps largely by virtue of being an American and thus freed from some of the conservative restrictions of English custom, added to the power of the novel by greater penetration into the minds of his characters. Probably in the interest of realism, he would have done better to have followed the policy of other early Amer-

ican writers, who contented themselves with careful imitations of English novel-writing or, as the national consciousness of the country developed, spent their energies depicting the atmosphere of the adventurous frontier life. James took his American to foreign countries which he could not make convincing, but he had a new emphasis on motivation. He gave to the novel "new nerves of sensitiveness, taught it to explore the mind for the little half resolutions and misgivings as well as for the decisions and rejections that ultimately make for action."[1]

So revered an author has Charles Dickens become, that no review of his period of writing could be complete without some mention of this author - even were it only to point out his lack of connection with the subject under discussion. Dickens' importance in a study of the psychological in fiction, however, would seem to be far greater than the average reader would suppose. In his better-known novels, he has created characters that will live, but mainly because he has endowed them with traits so distinct and over-emphasized that the figures are found on closer scrutiny to be actually caricatures. Dickens was primarily a social writer, and was successful in making the lower classes live, in mass. But Pip and Oliver Twist have been submerged in environmental influences, most of the components of the David Copperfield world

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[1] Norman Collins, The Facts of Fiction (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Incorporated, 1933) p. 235.

have been idealized or caricatured into none-too-convincing people, and the political significance of The Tale of Two Cities has caused Madame Defarge's knitting to be longer remembered than the sweet heroine, Lucy Manette. Not in the Dickens of these earlier, better-loved books, but in the author of the later, unfinished Mystery of Edwin Drood does Edmund Wilson[2] find the psychologist. Here, Mr. Wilson claims, Dickens has succeeded in getting good and bad into the same character - something he never achieved in his earlier novels. In this connection, interestingly enough, a comparison is made with Dostoevsky, who is said to have owed much to Dickens. The subject of Edwin Drood is the same as that of Crime and Punishment, but there is a vast difference in the way the two men have worked out the theme:

> Dostoevsky, with the courage of his insight, has studied the states of mind which are the results of a secession from society: the contemptuous will to spurn and to crush confused with the impulse toward human brotherhood, the desire to be loved twisted tragically with the desire to destroy and to kill. But the English Dickens with his middle-class audience would not be able to tell such a story even if he dared to imagine it. In order to stage 'war in the members,' he must contrive a whole machinery of mystification: of drugs, of telepathic powers, of remote oriental cults.[3]

Whether this difference is mainly one between Russian and English temperament or between the men themselves, is not easily answered. Obviously, Dickens was restrained by the age-old conservatism of English culture, but it is doubtful

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[2] Edmund Wilson, The Wound and the Bow, (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1941) p. 99.

[3] Loc. cit.

if, under any circumstances, he would have attained Dostoevsky's penetration and depth in the field of psychology.

Another English writer who has found herself compared with Dostoevsky is Emily Brontë. It is not difficult to see why the sombre, passionate story of Wuthering Heights suggests the work of Dostoevsky. The very atmosphere of the moor country out of which Emily Brontë's book grows would be the perfect English setting for one of Dostoevsky's novels. More than that, though, running through Wuthering Heights is a constant pitch of emotional intensity, frustration, wildness, and even madness that strongly suggests The Brothers Karamazov or even The Possessed. Both writers have the faculty of seeming to be passionately interested in or even identified with their characters, yet at the same time sufficiently detached to be convincing and analytical. Perhaps the temptation is too great in view of the support offered by the facts of the lives of Emily Brontë and of Dostoevsky, but their lives do seem to bear out the most obvious distinction between the psychological powers of both writers. Helen Muchnic, in the summary of her findings in the history of English and American critical opinion of Dostoevsky, says that, "In English fiction [Dostoevsky's work] approximates most nearly that of Emily Brontë, for they were both of them novelsits of lyric passion."[4] Actually they were both much more than this;

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[4] Helen Muchnic, Dostoevsky's English Reputation (Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, Vol. 20, No. 2. Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1939), p. 170.

neither could have achieved so much power and reality on mere "lyric passion". Yet Emily Brontë is less powerful and vital than Dostoevsky perhaps in the same degree that she knew less of the world and of people. Her contact with the world was amazingly limited, and one wonders how her reading and imagination could possibly have supplemented her limited acquaintances necessarily made in the thirty years of her life to the extent of bringing forth a Cathy and a Heathcliff. The madness of Heathcliff is no mere artistic convenience; it is of the sort that is all too real to the psychiatrist today. Certainly this one and only novel of Emily Brontë makes her no mean figure in the development of the psychological novel.

Not so startling from the point of view of psychological innovation in the novel, yet perhaps more important in other ways is George Eliot. In her one finds more of the conventional nineteenth century writer, but none the less an excellent one. Relatively extensive consideration will be given to her in this paper partly because of her success in character creation, but largely because of the very representativeness in her superiority, which makes her a useful figure as an English contemporary of Dostoevsky.

In George Eliot is found the English poise, stoicism, and outward calm that makes life's deep emotional conflicts require unveiling for recognition. Characters do not flaunt their passions for the world to see, do not generally make desperate attempts to explain their natures to others. The usual procedure is to devote life to repressing, concealing,

and defying any feeling. Here may be seen the English temperament in contrast to the Russian temperament; it is also the healthy and pleasantly detached mind of George Eliot in contrast to the turbulent, vitally intense mind of Dostoevsky.

Probably the most psychological and complex of Eliot's novels is Daniel Deronda. To be sure, epilepsy, which is one of Dostoevsky's specialities, is treated by the English writer in Silas Marner not unconvincingly, but while it does not cause disbelief, neither does it seem of much importance except to the furtherance of the plot of the story; even Silas's miserliness and reform lose their brilliance in a haze of sentimentality. Romola and Dinah are too good to be true, and Maggie Tulliver, although less perfect than the other heroines, has not been freed from sentimentality and melodrama. This is not to dismiss cursorily these novels of George Eliot, but rather to explain the selection of Daniel Deronda for the present purposes of psychological discussion and comparison.

Daniel himself does not furnish the grounds for the psychological importance of the book which has been named for him. For a man so young, he shows himself remarkably self-possessed, wise, and virtuous. As a Jew who makes the world forget the distinction between classes and races, who brings out the best in everyone, and who radiates sympathy and understanding that invite confidence or confession, he might be compared to Paul's conception of Jesus. He manifests just enough blushes, regrets, temptations, and uncertainties to

convince the reader of his reality. The minor characters are colorless or only partially presented: Anna, Mirah, and the Meyrick women all sweet, loyal, and little more than foils to Gwendolen, while Grandcourt is never seen beyond his cold, calculating veneer.

It is Gwendolen who serves as the main psychological interest of the novel. One knows from the first hour of her acquaintance that the spoiled, selfish, proud girl is destined to find that suffering is her portion in life. No small psychologist is George Eliot to bring about the strengthening and mellowing of this haughty girl without effecting any sudden or illogical changes.

George Eliot's analytical remarks vary from the delightfully terse to the disgustingly naïve. How much is said of Gwendolen in the simple statement that, "it was never her aspiration to express herself virtuously so much as cleverly,"[5] and how much of Anna in the parenthetical remark, "whose fears gifted her with second sight."[6] On the other hand, one does not like being told by the author to "beware of arriving at conclusions without comparisons,"[7] nor does one like the preaching on egoistic people, which follows the admonition. Such dissertations are annoying to the reader

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[5] George Eliot, Daniel Deronda (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, n.d.) v. 1, p. 400.

[6] Ibid., p. 94.

[7] Ibid., p. 56.

of today.

Particularly noteworthy in connection with Dostoevsky in this novel are the confessions which Gwendolen seems driven to make. They strongly suggest the passion for confession which runs through Dostoevsky's novels. However, in the case of Gwendolen, who is the only character who behaves in this way and who feels compelled to make these confessions only to Daniel, one suspects a merely personal device on Gwendolen's part to satisfy her craving for some sort of contact with Daniel. The reality of this motivation is in itself good psychology. Yet the general leisurely, imperturbable tone of George Eliot's novels makes her characters seem pale and casual beside the disturbing figures that take shape from Dostoevsky's pen. Aside from individual and national temperament, there is the significant fact that England was slow to acknowledge the new sociological, psychological, and literary freedoms which were already exerting influence in Russia and France. Dostoevsky wrote in the nineteenth century, but it was not until the twentieth century that the English-speaking nations were ready to receive him as a psychologist.

With Thomas Hardy at the close of the century, all the bright, sunny atmosphere of George Eliot has disappeared. Instead, one has the sinister heath as a background, suggesting Emily Brontë. In fact this dark background has assumed so important a place in Hardy's novels - especially in The Return of the Native - that the temptation is to lose

all sight of the significance of the characters in the overwhelming influence of the environment. Yet the validity of Eustacia Vye and Jude cannot be overlooked. These tortured souls, despite their dependence on a malignant Chance ever lurking around the next corner of their lives, are convincing in their reactions and their conflicts. Hardy's bitterness and pessism make his books unconventional in their disregard of the proper place and reward of good and bad. One gets the idea that only relatively unimportant figures can be happy; the ones who are made interesting to the reader are doomed to tragedy.

Galsworthy is also unconventional, but far from the pessimist and malignant power. He rebels against the aristocratic passion for property and against the restrictions on love that tie together those who do not love and holds apart those who do love. Yet when he attempts to present the aristocratic superficialities and material love of property in the persons of the Forsytes and particularly Soames, he plainly loves and makes the reader love these people. Similarly, in The Dark Flower, while the sympathies are all on the side of those who love where convention says they have no right, the inevitable final conclusion is that convention is pretty necessary after all and that those who try to defy it are inviting misery. In other words, Galsworthy has taken a big step toward freeing the novel of its restraining conventional patterns by furthering sympathy for the uncon-

ventional, yet, almost in spite of himself, he has ended by resigning himself to considerable observance of convention.

The American writer, Theodore Dreiser, cannot be overlooked in this connection. His characters are ruled by impulse rather than by ethical standards and he has obliterated most of the melodramatic quality of hero and villain, vice and virtue; furthermore, Sister Carrie runs a course which illustrates the "haphazard unpredictability" of life.[8] This is a complete reversal of the usual attempt to give the artistic stamp of inevitability and foreshadowing to novels. Whether or not this is an advance in art, it is certainly an advance in realism and in the independence and importance of character. While the treatment of Carrie may seem external, it is surprisingly penetrating even without an analysis of the character's motives in every case. According to Hansen, "the theory of behaviorism . . . was illustrated in Dreiser's novels even before Mr. Watson formulated it for the layman."[9]

Although the influence of different theories of psychology on fiction is too vast a subject to be treated in this paper, it is necessary to mention the influence of Freud on one or two writers. Much of the present psychology

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8 Percy H. Boynton, America in Contemporary Fiction, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940) p. 138.

9 Agnes Camilla Hansen, Twentieth Century Forces in European Fiction, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1934) p. 84.

and psychiatry is at least based on the theories of Freud, although the period of greatest attention to this man's ideas was in the decade preceding the other World War.

D. H. Lawrence's work is so concerned with the problem of sex as the root and cause of nearly all human behaviour, that Freud is naturally and immediately associated with the writing. Nevertheless, while the evidence of Lawrence's interest in Freud seems well established, the key to the particular emphasis in Sons and Lovers and similar books would seem to be even more in the life and personality of the author himself. The sexual agonies and abnormalities, the struggle between man and woman, the mother-complex, and the general tone of frustration are realistic to the extent that these very abnormalities are connected with the life of Lawrence almost as surely as epilepsy is attached to Dostoevsky. Waiving all attempt to clear or to convict Lawrence of these charges, one must admit that his characters are psychologically interesting, and certainly need psychological treatment!

Winesburg, Ohio also gives evidence of Freudian influence. In fact, the book is little more than a series of characterizations, or more rightly almost case studies, and most of the figures suffer from some sort of complex. Anderson's treatment is less impassioned, more objective. It is a significant landmark in the course of the development of the novel when interest can be achieved by a series of

of psychological analyses. The attention is wholly on character, and abnormal character at that. Exhibitionists and masochists add themselves to the increasingly large list of possible subjects for fiction.

Both Lawrence and Anderson, in their books mentioned above, furnish astounding examples of the broadening of human sympathies. They force the world to see as human beings the unfortunate people hitherto regarded as loathsome and evil or not considered fit to be regarded at all. Sons and Lovers and Winesburg, Ohio are given special attention here not because of their general excellence - even in psychology, but rather because of their extremeness. Maugham's Of Human Bondage is no doubt as sound psychologically and certainly better balanced, Sinclair Lewis is more the realist, and Thomas Wolfe is more powerful. But the very one-sidedness that handicaps Lawrence and Anderson as artists makes them more important in a psychological study.

Few writers could be found to be more one-sided or more agonized than William Faulkner. Out of the decadent south Faulkner pulls all the degraded, depraved, incestuous remains of a once glorious civilization. The Sound and the Fury is the most disturbing and the most astounding psychologically of his works. When a writer undertakes to present the first hundred pages or so of his novel through the mind of an idiot, it is indeed a revolutionary step in the presentation of pathology, although it is not the sort of tech-

nique to serve as a precedent. However displeasing and confusing to the reader, the device is impressive and convincing. Stream-of-consciousness is used in this part of the book, limiting the perceptions of the reader to the confines of the idiot's mind and giving one of the most depressing and dark atmospheres imaginable. In this darkness of the human mind, Adams, in his recent book sees at once the likeness and the difference between Faulkner and Dostoevsky:

> No American writer's name has been more frequently coupled with that of Dostoevsky, but Faulkner has never been able to balance the man-God against the man-beast as the Russian did. Dostoevsky was as aware as Faulkner of the darkly evil in human life but it did not engulf him as it has the strangely agonized romantic of Mississippi.[10]

There is, then, such a thing as trying to go so deeply and completely into a problem or an atmosphere that one becomes engulfed by it and thus defeats the original purpose. The increasing penetration into the mind in fiction has not only made great progress in England and America in the last two hundred years, but it has reached the point at which there is danger of completely falling in and losing control of other important considerations. The conscious concern and experimentation with more and more effective ways to get at the real workings of the human mind has certainly been greater among modern English and

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[10] J. Donald Adams, The Shape of Books to Come (New York: The Viking Press, 1944), p. 91.

American writers than it was with Dostoevsky. But has their success been greater? In attempting to answer this question, three of the modern novelists who have become noteworthy for their use of the stream-of-consciousness technique will be considered in some detail. This will complete the general introductory survey of the development of the psychological in the novel; contemporaries will not be included, as they cannot be properly selected or criticized at such close range.

According to Edward Wagenknecht, Richardson, Woolf, and Joyce are all stream-of-consciousness writers, but, "Of these writers, Miss Richardson is the one who shows the stream-of-consciousness method in its simplest form."[11] Pointed Roofs certainly bears out this thought, as there are no side-tracks or diversions in the book. From beginning to end, it is as if the reader were encased in Miriam, with never a glimpse of the world that is not appreciated by this girl's mind or detected by her senses. The view is far from an omniscient one. Effective it is, but extremely cramping it also is.

Few readers have not mental experiences of their own stored up that will produce a thrill of recognition at some of Miriam's apparently irrelevant thoughts at

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[11] Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the English Novel (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1943), p. 506.

times when the world expects her to be concentrating on a specific subject. In the midst of a disconcerting lecture by Fräulein on the departed Mademoiselle's moral behavior, Miriam, finding the talk unbearable, tries to "fix her thoughts on a hole in the table-cover. 'It could be darned. . . . It could be darned.'"[12] At times she predicts her own behavior understandingly. Something is wrong between Miriam and the world, or is it in her own mind? She tries to imagine how she would fare at Emma's home and with Emma's brother:

> She would laugh and pretend and flirt like the Pooles and make up to him - and it would be lovely for a little while. Then she would offend someone . . . and get tired and cross and lose her temper.[13]

By letting the reader so completely into an understanding of - almost into an identity with - Miriam, Dorothy Richardson has earned a right to an important place in psychological development of the novel. Yet the world through Miriam's perception has the effect of being veiled or only partly there. Perhaps the sensation is more like having on a horse's blinders. One feels the desire to push aside the narrowing, suffocating check on one's perceptive powers.

Here Virginia Woolf has come to the reader's aid. She does not limit herself to the confines of a single char-

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[12] Dorothy Richardson, Pilrimage, Pointed Roofs (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1919), p. 273.

[13] Ibid., pp. 253-254.

acter but shifts continually from one to the other of her six inside characters. There is a certain freshness, distinction, and delicacy about The Waves that is delightful. The symbolic and atmospheric theme of the waves at various times of day to correspond to stages of development in the characters lends charm - almost the air of poetry to the book.

Characterization is unique, impressive, and wonderfully descriptive. Rhoda "has no face" and continually "looks over people's shoulders", and Neville constantly loves order and worships Percival. So each character is presented with a few telling phrases which are repeated and borne out through the whole book. But when all is said and done, The Waves lacks reality of character and even of the world itself. And the constant jumping from one person to another, excluding with each transfer the reality of every human being but the one at the moment considered, confuses and tires the reader.

While Virginia Woolf's book does not lack charm, individuality, and imagination, it must be admitted that she has sacrificed one thing for the sake of another. She can well be accused of weakness both in plot and character. "She was less interested in Mrs. Brown than in 'Mrs. Brownness', less concerned about individuals than about 'the meaning which, for no reason at all' sometimes descended upon them."[14] The people are shown in their relationships to

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[14] Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 526.

each other and to the world, but the personalities are left obscure or merely high-lighted.

James Joyce has made of the novel something entirely new. It would seem on first reading that there can be no technique or device ever used which is not within the covers of Ulysses. It is probably safe to say that no other author has so well caught the exact mental processes of human beings. Nearly every method or device Joyce uses is found on analysis to be wonderfully effective. To give as examples just two of Joyce's many means of creating impressions, there are his manufactured words and his unfinished sentences. Probably no one else has ever thought of such a combination, yet when Joyce writes that Davy Byrne "smiled-yawnednodded,"[15] the reader immediately feels that the process could not be better conveyed with a thousand words. Equally realistic, as one realizes on analyzing one's own thoughts, is such reminiscence as, "Molly had that elephant-grey dress with the braided frogs. . . . She didn't like it because I sprained my ankle first day she wore choir picnic at the Sugarloaf. As if that."[16] Incomplete, but the rest of the thought is clearer than if it had all been written down. This is true stream-of-consciousness.

Perhaps Joyce's greatest single feat of characteriza-

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[15] James Joyce, Ulysses (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 175.

[16] Ibid., p. 153.

tion is the silent monologue of Molly Bloom at the end of the book. It is not that she is so much better drawn than her husband, but she is not of Joyce's sex and yet is made amazingly real in relatively few pages. This monologue is certainly one of the masterpieces in psychological fiction of all time.

Critical opinion varies greatly about Joyce, which of course would be expected, as anything unusual always calls for adverse as well as favorable comment. Just from the point of view of psychology, here are three different suggestions on the value of Joyce's methods. Drew says Ulysses is ". . . a true human document and for the scientific student of psychology a very vital document, but from the literary point of view it is an uninteresting human document."[17] Gilbert, in his book on Ulysses, claims that, ". . . two factors place Mr. Joyce's work in a class apart from all its predecessors: firstly, . . . the unusual angle from which he views his creatures, and, secondly, his use of the 'silent monologue.'"[18] Frierson finds Joyce significant in the history of the English novel, and says that, "Ulysses is an intensification of realistic urges in that the attempt is to render what is unconscious and half-conscious as well

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[17] Elizabeth A. Drew, The Modern Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1926), p. 66.

[18] Stuart Gilbert, James Joyce's "Ulysses" (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), p. 7.

as conscious; . . . "[19] No doubt all of these ideas could be supported. To the average reader Ulysses is undoubtedly uninteresting - or incomprehensible. For that reason Joyce's book will not become an example for future novel-writing; few people are willing to spend time reading books about a book in order to understand it. Once the symbolism is explained - as clearly as anyone besides Joyce can explain it - the book surely gains in interest. It is a masterpiece of organization, figures, parodies, symbols, themes, sound effects, and other poetical devices. When the significance of "metempsychosis" is seen as a theme which recurs constantly in different forms in the book rather than just an incidental word which was a mouthful for Molly, and when an innocent tower is found to be a symbol connected with Joyce's "omphalos",[20] the entire work becomes something different. One is inclined to reverse Elizabeth Drew's statement, acceptable on the surface, and give Ulysses all kinds of praise as a literary document, and be more doubtful of its value to the psychologist or the realist. The question must be asked: how much symbolism, how much plan can be included in the words and actions of the characters and still have them accepted as real beings? Yet, essentially, whatever hidden meaning or theme there may be in Ulysses, it is

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[19] William C. Frierson, The English Novel in Transition (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), p. 236.

[20] Interpretations from Gilbert, op. cit.

realistic psychological analysis of the human mind on the conscious, and possibly also the sub-conscious, level. Even if the total structure of the work gets in the way of complete naturalness of behavior, there is nothing to detract from the individual character revelations. Perhaps the inevitable conclusion will be that only a certain degree of psychological penetration is compatible with an artistic structure that entitles a work to be called a novel, and that beyond that point the work tends toward pure psychological treatise.

CHAPTER II

DOSTOEVSKY AS ARTIST

Having made a brief review of the development of the psychological novel in England and America, and having pointed out some of the strengths and weaknesses of the most psychological writers in each period, one can more readily evaluate the psychology of Dostoevsky from the angle of the modern, English-speaking, literary world. As was suggested in the previous chapter, a psychological novelist must be novelist as well as psychologist, and the strength of one of these may well call into question the validity of the other. Therefore, while the main concern of this study is with character creation, it is necessary first to give brief consideration to the author's handling of plot and theme and to the possibility of the sacrifice of these two essential fictional elements or of their interference with psychological credibility. After this will be considered the artistic methods employed by Dostoevsky in the presentation of his characters.

Hugh Walpole, writing in 1930, pronounces narrative and character creation the most important achievements of the novel, which is especially adapted for these two ends, and predicts with some satisfaction that the tendency toward this balance is returning.[1] By some apparently natural law, most

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[1] Hugh Walpole and others, Tendencies of the Modern Novel (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1934), p. 71.

tendencies seem to move, pendulum-like, through the various stages from one extreme to the other and then back again. The early writers are weak in their characters; the weakness is recognized, and a succession of authors set out to remedy the situation. But, as has been seen, by the time of Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf, so studied has character delineation become that there is no plot left, and in Woolf's The Waves, even the characters seem to have faded in the very light of too much exclusive attention.

How have Dostoevsky's plots fared through their creator's concern with psychology? Probably the novel of Dostoevsky which is best known in America today is Crime and Punishment, and this has as well-constructed a plot as one could rightly ask. Here is the detective story of all-time popularity, but with an entirely new emphasis. Instead of the usual quest to discover who committed the crime and how, there is the suspense of waiting for the authorities to discover what the reader already knows. Furthermore, the sympathy is on the side of the criminal. In building up to the crime, Dostoevsky is as careful in filling in details as Sherlock Holmes is in unraveling them afterward and as anxious to set the stage or prepare the reader's mind with fate and foreshadowing as Shakespeare. Fate uncannily enables Raskolnikov to overhear the arrangements for the next day that would take Lizaveta away from home and leave the old pawnbroker alone at precisely seven o'clock. Fate also brings to Raskolnikov's ears the hypothetical consideration

by a student in a tavern of the very murder upon which Raskolnikov had already decided. Hereafter, chance seems always on the side of the murderer: he stupidly knocks on the porter's door to return the incriminating axe, but the porter doesn't happen to be home; he is about to confess his own crime, but is shocked out of his momentary impulse by hearing the police officials discussing his very crime. So it goes to the end of the novel, with many narrow escapes to maintain suspense, but everything held back to allow the inevitable snap of the chain to be the direct result of Raskolnikov's own weight. In other words, the real plot is in the mind of the criminal, but it is no less there. The motivation, preparation, deed, punishment, and rehabilitation are really all within the character, although outward events continue to transpire and maintain their reality to the reader. The concerns of Svidrigaĭlov, Dounia, and Sonia are sub-plots and are closely woven with the main plot, but there remains only one main plot and one main character.

Also a mystery story with a psychological emphasis is The Brothers Karamazov. Yet this one is far from the one-tracked creation just discussed. This book is an advance in complication, penetration, and intricacy, but it has lost unity and tempo in its all-inclusiveness. The plot is wonderfully woven - a more magnificent structure than Crime and Punishment. Each of the Karamazov brothers, including the illegitimate Smerdyakov, is in a way a key figure and a

hero. Alyosha is the one who brings the various threads of the story together, largely by being the one least concerned in the plot. In this mystery, Dostoevsky leaves a slight but crucial moment blank for the reader, so that suspense is maintained up to the confession of Smerdyakov as to who is the actual murderer. But here again the interest is chiefly in the mental struggle of the various characters, and here again chance works in defense of the real criminal and against Dmitri. How carefully all has been planned by the writer so that Dmitri has given the wrong impression of the amount of money he spent, has withheld the wrong part of his story from Alyosha, and has made rash threats in regard to his father's relations with Grushenka! All is ripe for Dmitri to murder the old man; he even grasps his club with that thought in mind . . . and gives Grigory such a blow in trying to escape over the fence that he thinks he has committed a murder - of Grigory. The evidence is beautifully planted. Ivan is smoother, more deliberative, but he too wishes for the death of his father; indeed, he wishes so strongly that he goes away knowing that his satellite will kill the man for him - or does he know? Then follows the mental breakdown of the guilty. For Smerdyakov there is suicide, and for Ivan there is insanity. Dmitri is sentenced to prison, from which he plans to escape with Katya's aid and Grushenka's company. Alyosha emerges unpolluted, almost untouched by tragedy, except that he has been made

more capable of understanding through suffering. So much for the plot proper, which is a good one. Nevertheless, even allowing the interrelated plot of Dimitri's and Ivan's entanglements with Katya and Grushenka, there is a heavy mass of only remotely related material from which the plot must be extricated. One is inclined to feel that the Father Zossima and schoolboy chapters are dragged in to justify Alyosha's place as hero of the story, to build him up as a character and convince the reader of his importance by the number of pages devoted to him rather than by his essential part in the plot. Similarly, Ivan runs away with the book for a while when he expounds his ideas and fills in his background for the reader, and later Dimitri secures attention for his loves for Katya and Grushenka. It must be admitted that, meritorious as The Brothers Karamazov is, it is and unwieldy entity. Apparently here Dostoevsky's psychological interest has proved detrimental to his plot. The characters have outgrown the work that the artist had for them to do.

The Idiot is a better-knit novel than The Brothers Karamazov, although by no means so well-known and widely read in this country. Myshkin needs no justifying for his prominence in the book; the whole plot hinges around him and is built upon his character and his relationship to the rest of the people involved. Prince Myshkin lives, as it were, a lifetime in the short interval of his life allowed him in the normal world of men. By virtue of the very inno-

cence and untainted nature that make him seem an idiot, he becomes the center of everyone's life with whom he comes in contact. Knowing nothing of women, he finds himself loved and idealized by the heretofore apparently heartless Nastasya Filippovna and also by the conventionally pure Aglaia. Thus he incurs the wrath and hatred of Rogozhin, who is too passionately in love with Nastasya to live peaceably with her, yet who must eventually have her in his power. Natasya, on her part, loves Myshkin too well to ruin him, yet finally is too possessive to let Aglaia have him, so proves her power over him and then gives herself to Rogozhin, who she knows will murder her. Finally breaking under the strain of so much anguish and horror, Myshkin is retrieved from his active rôle in life by the onslaught of real idiocy - the worst stage of the epilepsy which had kept him so long aloof from the world and constantly threatened him after he returned to it. Character is the dominant concern of the book, not plot. But on the whole, Myshkin as a figure has sufficient artistic structure on which to stand; the story moves rapidly most of the time around a central character and the central plot. Some exceptions to this statement will be noted in a succeeding paragraph which deals with the subject of themes.

An attempt to discuss the plot of The Possessed is almost like an attempt to relate the plot of the neighbors of a certain small street. Each family has its own problems and complications, and the various families are connected

when one neighbor calls on another or when there is an epidemic of scarlet fever, but essentially each family is a separate unit. So it is in The Possessed. Stavrogin seems intended to be the main character; he is fascinating psychologically, and he seems to influence many of the other characters. Yet relatively little is seen of him or even heard of him. He is halfway connected with the Society, and thus an important figure as to connections with others. Already secretly married to the lame, deranged Marya Timofyevna, Stavrogin allows her to be murdered, spends one night with Lizaveta Nikolaevna, who has long been in love with him, lets her know that he does not love her, after a long lapse of time sends for the faithful Darya Pavlovna, then immediately hangs himself. Running along with this series of events, but hardly connected with it, is the story of Stepan Trofimovitch, his friendship with Stavrogin's mother, his decline in popularity as a literary lecturer and intellect, his peculiar desire to be considered a dangerous man by the police, and his final running away and death. Similarly, one has the pathetic story of Shatov, and the unfortunate Andrey Antonovitch with his ambitious wife who becomes mixed up in the doings of the Society. The plot in this book has certainly become disintegrated, but has not been sacrificed to psychology; rather, both characterization and plot have given way to theme, which will be treated further on.

In The Eternal Husband, a shorter and less complex

novel, the traditional cuckold turns up years later to torment the one-time lover of his now deceased wife. Pavel Pavlovitch, having discovered that Velchaninov is the father of the child that Pavel has always considered his own daughter, really causes much suffering for the other man, who must watch the maltreatment of the little girl and then her death without being able to claim her or save her. Thereafter the two men, hurting and hating each other, cannot seem to let each other alone. Ultimately the unsuccessful attempt of Pavel Pavlovitch to murder Velchaninov brings the relationship to an end. Here Meier-Graefe thinks the story should end,[2] without the episode which brings the two men together two years later and gives Velchaninov occasion to refuse the invitation of another capricious wife of Pavel. Perhaps structurally the omission would be good, but it would also detract from the impression of eternalness of the husband. While not the greatest of Dostoevsky's works, it is a very readable story just as it is.

The Double is more remarkable and much more psychological than The Eternal Husband, and thus more typical of Dostoevsky. The book is entirely concerned with the mental breakdown of Mr. Golyadkin. Strangely enough, the treacherous and slippery fellow who usurps the place of the original Mr. Golyadkin furnishes almost all of the action, yet he

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[2] Julius Meier-Graefe, Dostoevsky, the Man and his Work (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), p. 217.

does not exist at all. The unfortunate hero is trapped, cheated, deceived by the imposter and gradually by the whole world, shadowy as it is here, as if a net were being drawn around him to pull him into the insane asylum. In this book psychology really is the plot.

This statement very nearly applies also to the short story, A Gentle Spirit, although Meier-Graefe has seen fit to sum up and dismiss the story in one sentence:

> A usurer marries a client who is down and out; the marriage is unhappy; she realizes her husband's love only at the moment of committing suicide; a last touching contribution to the chapter of the insulted and injured.[3]

Of course, these are the bare facts of the action, but they seem not to be the most important part even of the plot alone. The plot is actually the wearing-away process by which the usurer, driven by a set of warped mental and emotional reactions, drives his wife to her death. In the realm of the short story where plot is so important and where flaws bulk so large in proportion to the scope of the work, Dostoevsky has in this story shown himself capable of building his plot on a psychological base without having the structure crumble.

Of Dostoevsky's plots in general, then, it may be said that they are always there to carry the interest along - plots in the sense traditionally accepted of a building up of complications and then unraveling of these complications

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[3] Ibid., p. 288.

either in the direction of destruction or of solution. In this way Dostoevsky differs from the stream-of-consciousness writers of English literature who are correspondingly concerned with psychology, but who treat plots as unnecessary encumberance (The Waves), relegate them to diary-like record with little selection or arrangement (Pointed Roofs), or make of them something foreign to the point of meaninglessness for the average reader (Ulysses). As has been seen, Dostoevsky handles his plots with varying degrees of success. He sometimes buries them under his characters, as in The Brothers Karamazov, or allows them to disintegrate under the pressure of his theme, as in The Possessed. But he cannot fairly be accused of a general sacrifice of plot.

Nearly every book that is written has one or more themes - even if it is only an attempt at life photography. These themes usually influence or even determine the thoughts, actions, and lives of the characters in a novel. The question of the extent to which an author is justified in ordering the events of his story to prove a thesis is one which will ever remain in the realm of opinion, but when too much is made of the theme, one naturally must question the validity of the characters as realistic beings. There are many different ways in which the idea behind the work can dominate it - all the way from Pamela, which in order to be a handbook for young ladies must of necessity end with the reward of virtue, to Ulysses, which must put in the mouths

of the characters words and ideas that carry the weight of symbolism. To what extent can one say of Dostoevsky that he mars the artistic value of his work with too much of his own theory too obviously asserted (as was pointed out in some of George Eliot's work) or that he sacrifices some of the spontaneity of his character's reactions by forcing upon them words or actions that will prove their creator's thesis? No attempt will be made here to discuss or enumerate the theories and beliefs of Dostoevsky. Attention is given only to instances where theme might be considered to interfere with plot or character or where it is especially well handled.

It is in The Possessed that the reader is most conscious of theme. One cannot help but feel that the Society and the attitude of Dostoevsky toward it has usurped the book. Stavrogin, who has the makings of an excellent Dostoevsky hero, fades as the story progresses, and disappoints the reader. From an interesting if terrible figure, he gradually shrinks and merges with all the other "possessed" who illustrate the theory that the ". . . philosophy of atheism . . . as subjectivism and individualism, leads to murder or to suicide."[4] Stavrogin's suicide in itself is not forced, but he has become so remote a person throughout the activities of the secret workers that

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4 Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, The Spirit of Russia (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), II, 267.

his hanging himself merely fits in with the general theory of the end of all nihilists instead of being an outgrowth of an individual life. Pyotr Stepanovitch occupies a good part of the book and is little more than the embodiment of all that is unhealthy in nihilism; he is the instrument of revolutions, murders, and crimes; he is the son against the father; he represents almost all that Dostoevsky hates and fears in the younger generation of Russia. Stepan Trofimovitch, the father of this man, a touching figure pained by the cruelty of his son and others like him, elaborates on the theme taken from the Bible and applies the figure of the possessed swine to the badness that has entered Russia. Just before his death he finds significance in this passage that has puzzled him all his life:

> "You see, that's exactly like our Russia, those devils that come out of the sick man and enter into the swine. They are all the sores, all the foul contagions, all the impurities, all the devils great and small that have multiplied in that great invalid, our beloved Russia, in the course of ages and ages. . . . But a great idea and a great Will will encompass it from on high, as with that lunatic possessed of devils . . . and all those devils will come forth, all the impurity, all the rottenness that was putrefying on the surface . . . and they will beg of themselves to enter into swine; and indeed maybe they have entered into them already![5]

This is Dostoevsky expounding at once his fear of this disease which has infected the country and his faith in Russia's ultimate recovery and salvation. Perhaps this is di-

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[5] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Possessed (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), pp. 615-616.

dacticism, but it is not unartistic or unrealistic in the mouth of Stepan Trofimovitch, and it does much to pull together the straggling ends of the novel as a whole. However, the theme is not powerful enough to hold together in an artistic pattern all the diverse characters and complications which swarm through the book.

The same theme is behind the characters of Ivan and Smerdyakov in The Brothers Karamazov and of Raskolnikov in Crime and Punishment. Both Ivan and Raskolnikov are so-called double characters; it is this other side which saves Raskolnikov from going completely into the class of the possessed and probably also the cause of Ivan's insanity. These two books, although they have put across the same theme, have not made it their sole concern and thus been overwhelmed by it.

In The Idiot, the intrusion of Ippolit - and all of his young nihilist companions, if indeed he can be said to have had companions - but particularly of Ippolit with his insufferably long Explanation is perhaps the only flaw of content in the book. One feels that this digression is dragged in by its hair, as it were. The obvious introduction of this theme is handled rather badly by Dostoevsky here, but it does not have the devastating effect that it has in The Possessed, where it is constant rather than incidental.

As to the final interrelation and proportion of plot, character, and theme, a few conclusions, if not taken too

rigidly, might be drawn. No one of the three sides is constantly weak or bungled throughout his novels, but both character and theme sometimes damage the balance of the books by their excess of prominence or control. Taken over a number of works, the psychological interest is the strongest and thus makes justifiable a classification of Dostoevsky among the psychological novelists. The nature and prominence of psychology in his books make for distinctive but sometimes also lop-sided fiction.

Treatment of the more technical aspects of Dostoevsky's artistry will be limited chiefly to his methods of character portrayal, as they are the most essential to the present study. Closely related to the methods of character portrayal, however, is the question of point of view. Forster considers along with Percy Lubbock, that point of view is the governing factor behind all the question of method - the position of the author in relation to his characters: whether inside one, none, or all of them.[6] In the matter of presenting characters the point of view certainly does to a large extent determine the light which will be thrown on the figures in the story.

Upon investigation one finds that Dostoevsky allows himself the freedom of changing his position to suit various

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[6] Percy Lubbock, cited by Edward Morgan Forster, Aspects of the Novel (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), pp. 118-119.

parts of the book and to suit different books. Crime and Punishment and The Idiot have distinct central characters and with these Dostoevsky takes extensive liberty in entering their minds, more so in the case of Raskolnikov than in that of Myshkin. The motivation of the crime of Raskolnikov is made clear to the reader by an intimate journey over a number of pages inside the criminal, yet Dostoevsky does not hesitate to branch off completely from anything Raskolnikov experiences in the account of Svidrigailov's suicide nor to give news of the prisoner through the letters of Sonia to his mother and sister. Similarly with Myshkin, Dostoevsky remains aloof from the central figure long enough and often enough to clothe him in a certain amount of mystery and cause the reader to wonder for many pages whether the prince is mentally sound or not. The strangeness and unexpectedness of his remarks make an impression which could not be achieved were the reader let into the secret workings of his mind at all times. It is certainly a gift of the artist that he can so well judge when to penetrate a character and when to regard him from a distance so as to gain sympathy for him yet not allow him to confess himself beyond the scope of an outsider's interest.

In The Brothers Karamazov which has a number of characters all more or less equally important, Dostoevsky jumps back and forth from one character to another and then to a position remote from all of them. The demands of his plot

require that he leave Dimitri just at the point of his urge to kill his father so that the reader is left in doubt just as is the rest of the world, there being no eye-witnesses. At the end of the book at the court trial, the point of view is entirely changed, no doubt with the idea of creating the atmosphere really present in the courtroom. As Mr. Meier-graefe says, "Dostoevsky is also in the crowd, discussing the matter with his neighbor."[7] And there also must the reader be.

Interestingly enough, Dostoevsky withdraws to this position throughout all of The Possessed. Perhaps that is the reason that none of the characters in the book grew to the heights of characters in his other novels, or perhaps the incapacity for growth of these figures accounts for Dostoevsky's reluctance to associate himself with them. The colorless but important "I" that carries the reader through the story maintains a fairly impersonal angle. Even the more intimate scenes to which the reporter is not admitted are recounted as told to him by someone afterward. If Dostoevsky loves anyone in The Possessed, it is Stepan Trofimovitch, and, significantly, this man is the one who is closest to the reporter and makes him his confidant.

In direct contrast to this external treatment is that of The Double. Here the identification of Dostoevsky with

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[7] Meier-Graefe, op. cit., p. 373.

his hero is so complete that the reader is confused as to what is real and what is purely in the mind of the character. The muddled, indistinct picture which the reader gets of the party into which Mr. Golyadkin thrusts himself is suggestive of the technique already noticed in Chapter I of this paper that Faulkner employs in the first part of The Sound and the Fury. Dostoevsky's method is not so sustained and incomprehensible, however; perhaps one should be grateful here that Dostoevsky did not write under the influence of the stream-of-consciousness technique! As it is, he has taken a unique stand. "He [stands] by his hero, not as a physician, but as participator in his fate, himself [believes] in the corporeality of the double and only on the threshhold of the asylum [rids] himself of the illusion."[8]

The point of view in A Gentle Spirit is also worthy of note, but, as the whole story is in the form of a confession, it will be included in the discussion of confession as a method of characterization.

Dostoevsky as a technician is not a radical in the sense of throwing out all the traditional devices and launching out on a new plan which utilizes exclusively his own innovations. Several methods of characterization are remarkable in the work of Dostoevsky, in that they are more prevalent or more powerful than in the ordinary book; few if any

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[8] Ibid., p. 69.

of the secrets of his technique are entirely original with him, and far from being a handicap, this fact may be the reason for a good bit of his success.

The two most common means of character portrayal are, of course, comments made by the author to the reader and dramatization through which the reader can draw his own conclusions as to the character that lies behind certain actions and words. Comments by the writer can be extremely apt or extremely irritating; both kinds have been noticed in Dostoevsky's English contemporary, George Eliot. Dostoevsky does occasionally preach or dissertate at lengths which are sometimes annoying, but he does not talk down to the reader and warn him to be careful of the conclusions he draws. On the other hand, he has Eliot's faculty of making terse remarks that present a situation or a character in a phrase or sentence. This is especially true of type or minor figures. Who does not feel he knows well the slippery Golyadkin junior who answers ". . . with uncivil familiarity, disguised as good-natured heartiness"?[9] In the domestic scene of The Idiot in which Ganya is forced to defend his engagement, which he does not really approve himself, before his family, Dostoevsky aptly analyzes not only Ganya's state, but a universal condition which everyone must recognize as

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[9] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Double, from The Eternal Husband and other stories (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 250.

familiar:

> Ganya's voice betrayed that pitch of irritation when a man almost revels in his own irritability, gives himself up to it without restraint and almost with growing enjoyment, regardless of consequences.[10]

A character more minor than either Golyadkin or Ganya is made unforgettable by the singularity and humor of the few words which are devoted to her. Of the silent beauty at Nastasya's party Dostoevsky says,

> She was a novelty and it had become a fashion to invite her to certain parties, sumptuously attired, with her hair dressed as though for a show, and to seat her in the drawing-room as a charming decoration, just as people sometimes borrow from their friends for a special occasion a picture, a statue, a vase, or a fire-screen.[11]

Humor in Dostoevsky is neither frequent nor obvious, but it serves its purpose well when it occurs. The author-to-reader comments, while they are handled with dexterity by Dostoevsky and establish a certain intimacy not attained by every writer, are not by any means peculiar to Dostoevsky, and therefore must not be given too much attention.

Whenever the artist wishes to withdraw himself and thus the reader from a position of closeness to the characters, he must resort either to a narration of events or to dramatization. Dostoevsky has adopted this latter means with great success. The conditions under which he adopts a more remote position have already been noticed in the con-

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[10] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 99.

[11] Ibid., p. 156.

sideration of point of view, but it seems well to give here a few examples of the specific ways in which the dramatization is done. Instances may be found in every story here considered with the questionable exception of A Gentle Spirit.

The opening of The Idiot, before one has made the acquaintance of any of the characters, is an interesting drama. Instead of the detailed explanation and analysis which often introduces the figures of one of Dostoevsky's stories, there is merely the stage set, a physical description of the three men who are riding on the train together, and then conversation in which each of the men quite naturally reveals himself as to general personality. Myshkin is cloaked in mystery by the frankness and innocence of his remarks, paradoxically enough. And to some extent the author maintains this mystery to the end of the book despite the intimacy which one is allowed later on. The unexpectedness of Myshkin's actions and statements command respect and awe which could never be achieved for the hero if his creator were too ready to explain away such occurrences.

The Double, although largely restricted by the bounds of Mr. Golyadkin's understanding, has a number of purely dramatized scenes. In Golyadkin's visit to the doctor the converstion brings to mind the so-called double-talk of modern comedy - a particularly appropriate term here. The doctor and the reader are gradually forced to see the strange tales of the unfortunate man as the dreams of the importance

to which he has aspired so long that he actually believes he has achieved it.

The scene at Mokroe after the murder of old Karamazov in The Brothers Karamazov lends itself especially well to the dramatic technique. The pitch of excitement to which all are keyed and the suspense of the reader, who is not sure of the extent of Mitya's guilt nor of the length of time allotted before the arrival of the police, make the scene excellent drama. It maintains the always-successful pressure of having perhaps but an hour to live. At the end of this same book, the stage-like presentation of the trial emphasizes the torture and reactions of the various characters as well as increasing the contrast between the trivialness of the error made by the judges from the legal point of view and the seriousness of it from the point of view of the individuals involved.

It is in The Possessed, however, that the method of dramatization is the most noticeable. Meier-Graefe contends that the novel-drama form (his term for the drama-like presentation here being discussed) has spoiled both the hero and the whole novel.[12] Certainly the novel is not one of the best of the author's creations, but the question might well be asked whether the technique may not be rather the result of the predominence of the theme and the attitude of

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[12] Meier-Graefe, op. cit., p. 229.

Dostoevsky toward the people about whom he feels called upon to write. While the book as a whole has beyond doubt lost something by the prevalent use of this method, there are many instances of the technique itself which must be considered master-touches. The aimlessness and ridiculousness of the Society, which should perhaps be treated almost as an individual since so many of the characters are representative of it, is made amazingly clear in the meeting at Virginsky's. The stupidity of the guests who cannot seem to get the two facts into their heads at the same time: whether the for's or the against's are to vote and whether they are to indicate their vote by putting up their hands or keeping them down, is a clever use of the humorous to emphasize the nature of the people being portrayed. Another device used by Dostoevsky in the dramatization of scenes is a discerning description of facial expressions - a powerful weapon in the hands of Hollywood producers. Perhaps the most arresting example of this is in the reaction of Stavrogin to the blow of Shatov before the drawing room company. He does not do any violence to Shatov, even putting his hands behind his back. "But, strange to say, the light in his eyes seemed to die out."[13]

Dreams are conspicuous in the novels of Dostoevsky, as are also hallucinations. Both seem to interest him

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[13] Dostoevsky, The Possessed, op. cit., p. 191.

greatly. In The Idiot Ippolit and Myshkin have dreams that Dostoevsky sees fit to recount in his story. Ippolit's long, detailed dream perhaps has no real place in the novel, but it is more interesting reading than is the rest of his tedious Explanation. The account of the hideous monster which chases the sick boy around his room and finally is crushed by the pet dog that has been dead five years is a very natural mixture of present and past impressions and mental conflicts. While there is no attempt to make a Freudian analysis of the dream, one feels that there is some significance in the dream, not in the prophetic sense, but more in the Freudian sense of gaining insight into the subconscious mind of the dreamer. Myshkin also has dreams. His even have a hint of prophesy in them, but not to such an extent that the realist is annoyed. The woman who appears to him and disturbs him so much is clearly Nastasya; in the dream the conflict between the desire to be loyal and see nothing but the best in her and the gnawing conviction that she really is bad comes to light. Waking, Myshkin will not allow himself to see in her the wickedness that the rest of the world sees there. The theory of the presence of the subconscious in dreams could not be put much more clearly outside of Freud than Dostoevsky states it in musing on the nature of dreams in general.

> You laugh at the absurdities of your dream, and at the same time you feel that interwoven with those absurdities some thought lies hidden, and a thought that is real, something belonging to your actual

life, something that exists and has always existed in your heart.[14]

In Crime and Punishment the dream of Raskolnikov is extremely significant. Again, there is no hocus-pocus or supernatural about the dream, but Dostoevsky would have one believe that the conscience, still as it may be in waking hours, is at liberty to express itself through dreams. If it were not for the chance hearing by Raskolnikov soon after of the hour Lizaveta would be away and clear the scene for the murder, he would probaly be saved from his crime by this dream. Sleeping, Raskolnikov sees the cruelty and senselessness of the killing a poor mare with the eyes of his boyhood, when he was still a Christian and still believed in natural laws. For a short time after the dream, the other, long-repressed side of the man is uppermost - the side that prompts his generosity with Marmeladov's family, the love for his mother and sister, and his final recovery.

Velchaninov's dreams are a bit more bothersome to the realist, especially as to the imagined ringing of the doorbell which foreshadows in the first dream the appearance of Pavel Pavlovitch at the door several hours later, and in the second dream the attempt of the same gentleman to cut his throat. Even this is not so unusual, however, as Velchaninov surely has some suspicion of the man's identity in his subconscious mind or elsewhere. Certain schools of psycho-

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[14] Dostoevsky, The Idiot, op. cit., p. 455.

logy would no doubt maintain that he fails to recognize the man with the crape on his hat because he really does not want to. At any rate the dreams are both filled with various distorted versions of his innermost fears and intuitions. Dostoevsky plainly intends that the reader shall gather more information about the mental workings of his characters through their dreams.

Hallucinations play much the same part as do dreams. In the Gentleman that persists in pestering the distraught Ivan in The Brothers Karamazov are found many thoughts that Ivan recognizes as his own, yet also some that he does not claim. What is one to assume if not again the subconscious? The Gentleman himself explains to Ivan, "Well, that's how it is now, though I am your hallucination, yet just as in a nightmare, I say original things which had not entered your head before."[15] Ivan suffers from the same sort of thing that is seen in the case of Golyadkin in The Double. But it would seem that Ivan's hallucination comes from a guilty conscience, with the imagined figure playing the part of devil to him. Golyadkin, on the other hand, suffers from a thwarted ambition. This double of poor Mr. Golyadkin dogs his footsteps and then walks ahead of him, realizing all of the little man's own ambitions and pushing the original far-

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[15] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 691.

ther and farther into the mire. Once the idea has caught hold of him, Mr. Golyadkin never seems to doubt its existence, whereas Ivan fights off the acceptance of the Gentleman who torments him. This difference in the two hallucinations may be intended to indicate the discrepancy in the two men's intelligence, or in the seriousness of their derangement. Without the hallucination of Ivan his madness would not be convincing, and without that of Golyadkin there would be no story called The Double.

One of Dostoevsky's favorite and most distinctive methods of characterization is through the confession of the characters. In The Brothers Karamazov the desire of various characters to confess to each other almost amounts to an obsession. This is partly Russian emotion, earnestness, and impulsiveness as against English reserve and stoicism perhaps. While Gwendolen's confessions to Daniel in Daniel Deronda are suggestive of these of Dostoevsky's figures, George Eliot has not by any means made the practice prevalent, but has confined it to the one character and thus given it an individual significance rather than a universal one. Although Ivan protests that his ideas on God and his imparting them to Alyosha are not important, one soon learns that he is really under a compulsion to explain and confess himself out to his younger brother in the hope that he can make him understand. The attempt is futile. Ivan cannot believe, and Alyosha cannot help but believe. After this long talk

of Ivan's, though, it is hardly necessary to say more about him until it comes to the changes and conflicts which arise in connection with the murder of his father. Dimitri similarly opens his soul to Alyosha. In giving his account of his relations with Katerina Ivanovna he not only fills in important preliminary events of the story, but also does a pretty fair job of characterizing himself. He brings out not only the impulsive gallantry of which he is capable, but also the baseness and sensuality of the Karamazov nature. Both Ivan and Dimitri have, so to speak, spared Dostoevsky the trouble of describing their natures; they reveal themselves. And it is a clever device, lending variety to the book. There may be as many words and pages devoted to characterization, but there is something about the fact the words are in the mouth of a character rather than in that of the novelist that makes them less tiresome to read.

Just as hallucination, which is a small though important part of the characterization in The Brothers Karamazov, becomes the whole means in The Double, so the confession becomes the whole means in A Gentle Spirit. It is amazing that a story which is presented as a confession in monologue by the character who is the main psychological interest can make the situation so clear to the reader and yet leave the poor man who is telling the story so much in ignorance. To be sure, there is much which he sees all too clearly now that it is too late that he did not see before, but he does not

become omniscient all at once. The sort of thing accomplished here is similar to one of the testimonies in Browning's The Ring and the Book in that the reader is given the essential facts of the case, but with a distinct bias. The usurer is plainly still at war with himself, and this fact helps to give a more rounded picture of the whole affair; he is full of remorse and self-blame now that his wife is dead, yet one feels that his love is not on a normal level. Would he as soon have her dead just so long as he could still possess her and feed his pride on her? The method is distinctly successful, especially as a novelty and a new means for a new type of short story, which deals with a psychological subject.

After a consideration of some of the dangers into which the novelist can fall through too much interest in psychological emphasis, Dostoevsky has been found to be quite capable of competing with others as artist; and some of the technique of his artistry which relates more specifically to characterization has been pointed out. The way now seems clear to present him as psychologist.

CHAPTER III

RANGE OF CRIMINALITY

Dostoevsky's psychology may very well seem one thing to the Russian and an entirely different thing to the Englishman or American. Helen Muchnic questions the value of Dostoevsky for the English:

> Can it be that Dostoevsky is "too Russian" for the English? Is it true, perhaps, that artists belong so absolutely to their soil that they may not be duplicated or even understood beyond the boundaries of their own land? This is difficult for me to believe; and yet, in spite of all the interest in Dostoevsky and borrowing from him, he has seemed to many to be essentially foreign to the English spirit.[1]

The essential difference between Dostoevsky and the English writer which would make the Russian characters seem strange to the English is certainly one of degree rather than of kind. One cannot help but be startled at first by the intensity and earnestness of the people who swarm through the pages of Dostoevsky's novels. This extreme intensity, as well as the conception of men as both good and evil all at once, Virginia Woolf lays to the Russian concern with the soul.[2] Whatever the reason that lies behind it, the quali-

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[1] Helen Muchnic, Dostoevsky's English Reputation (Smith College Studies in Modern Languages, Vol. 20, no. 2. Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1939), p. 175.

[2] Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader, pp. 243-256, cited by Muchnic, op. cit., p. 135.

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ty is there. Yet, far from being a handicap, this intensity should serve to make various truths of human behavior more clear to the English by acting as a sort of magnifying glass. The motivation and reactions of Dostoevsky's characters will be found to be universal in principle, even if Russian in pitch. For that matter, even English writers have recognized for ages the advantage and power of exaggeration, dramatic arrangement, and the selection of extremes to heighten effect.

One of the most astonishing recurrent situations in Dostoevsky's books is the intensification of relationships between the characters. In the course of the study of each character, this fact will be brought out again and again. Everyone experiences fluctuations between affection and revulsion toward certain people, but the English temperament is not generally given to exchanging crosses with someone with the idea of becoming a virtual brother one minute, and trying to murder him the next, as does Rogozhin with Myshkin. Probably the average Russian temperament is not so given either! Fortunately, neither is the average Englishman a Heathcliff, but that does not say that there are no Heathcliff's in the world nor that everyone does not have a few Heathcliff qualities or impulses.

It has been a temptation to charge Dostoevsky with filling his novels with insane, abnormal, and criminal creatures. Many a voice has been raised against him ~~for~~

for being a morbid or unhealthy influence for this very reason. This paper is presented under the conviction that this is anything but true; rather, that Dostoevsky is among the very greatest of humanitarians. He has offered to the world, if the world were only wise enough to accept it, a basis for a necessary understanding and toleration for all kinds of peculiarities and misfortunes of human beings.

Since the main concern of Dostoevsky is so frankly with the psychology of criminality and the range of mental abnormality, the characters here will be separated roughly into two chapters for purposes of discussion. Of course, the very fact of criminality in those of this chapter indicates an abnormal mental condition. Also, the next chapter will include in its range of mentality the most normal as well as the most obviously depraved.

The theory, already noticed as a dominant theme in Dostoevksy's work, that atheistic nihilism is the basis for crime - murder, suicide, and revolution - is exemplified in many of his characters. The theory is behind the creation of the characters, but it is not just to assume that it has necessarily distorted or restricted them; for without doubt the theory arose from a first-hand observation of life and people. Although they have individual traits, a number of Dostoevsky's criminals can be grouped together as more or less "possessed". These will be considered first.

Of all these "possessed" it is Pyotr Stepanovitch Ver-

hovensky who is most typical of all the ills of the society and who is the most dangerous. He perhaps alone knows what he is doing and why he is doing it. From the first meeting with this character, the reader must acquire a distrust and loathing for the man who ". . . must have a tongue of special shape, somehow exceptionally long and thin, extremely red with a very sharp everlastingly active little tip."[3] With extreme suavity he seems to wriggle his way into the confidence of everyone who can serve some purpose for him. Of course he has the advantage over all, as he seems to have freed himself of all loves or loyalties that could cause in him any conflict or hesitation. A scoundrel, he calls himself, not a socialist. His creed or ambition as expressed to Stavrogin certainly bears out his own name for himself:

> "The thirst for culture is an aristocratic thirst. The moment you have family ties or love you get the desire for property. We will destroy that desire; We'll make use of drunkenness, slander, spying; we'll make use of incredible corruption; we'll stifle every genius in its infancy. We'll reduce all to a common denominator! Complete equality!"[4]

Through the unsuspecting Yulia Mihailovna, who is a social climber and honestly believes she is pushing her husband ahead, Verhovensky contrives to undermine the power and finally the mind of the luckless governor, Andrey Antonovitch. The serpent of Eden himself could not more deftly

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[3] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Possessed (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 166.

[4] Ibid., p. 391.

gain access to all of the governor's secrets and papers and encourage the governors wife to bring about her own mortification and ruin and that of her husband by giving the fatal fête and allowing the servants of the revolution to turn the party into a ruse for their own propaganda. In his own actions Verhovensky sets the example of complete freedom of manner and the code that anything is permissible that is not honorable. When at the meeting at Virginsky's Pyotr Stepanovitch calmly asks for scissors and cuts his fingernails before the party, the blushes and open admiration of the others present furnish a clever contrast between the studied, cold carrying out of the principle of independence by Pyotr Stepanovitch and the timid half-acceptance of the others. Only with Stavrogin does Verhovensky seem to fail. He proves no more able to predict or order this strange man's behavior than does anyone else. He counts on Stavrogin to let himself be kept for the purposes of revolution until the proper moment when he wants to bring him forth as the mysterious new leader of the new order of society. An ingenious plan perhaps, if he had chosen a less erratic idol, but his attempt to bribe Stavrogin, by disposing of his idiotic wife in the fire and by bringing him the unhappy Lizaveta, fails. The woman he succeeds in ruining, but it is to no avail. How typical a flaw in Verhovensky that he counts on commanding everyone else by appealing to the very emotion of love from which he considers himself free. Unfortunately, Pyotr

Stepanovitch is not among those of the "possessed" who resort to suicide or to simple murder. And this is another realistic touch of Dostoevsky. Verhovensky is the type that goes on to stir up revolution and terror in other towns when he has done all he can do in one place. In him the obsession has come to rule his life, having sprung from it, and therefore there is no conflict for him.

In all the rest of the characters who are possessed with the idea of the domination of their own wills and the denial of all superior laws and powers, there is war between this desire and other human impulses and concerns. Few men have had lives which make the renunciation of family ties so easy as has Pyotr Stepanovitch. For this reason he cannot count on the followers he has left behind to carry on in his absence; most of them without a tyrant over them will be driven by their consciences to betrayal or madness. The young Erkel, who has made of Verhonsky an idol, is old and keen enough to realize this. As Verhonsky leaves the town, Erkel knows that the leader will not be back despite his promises to the contrary - that he is saving his own skin as well as working for the cause. Erkel tells the departing hero that the people are not to be trusted, but Verhovensky replies with the vehemence of a man who strives to convince himself as well as his listener: "Nonsense! They are all bound by what happened yesterday. There isn't one who would turn traitor. People won't go to certain destruction unless

they've lost their reason."[5] Erkel's answer has the sound of prophesy: "Pyotr Stepanovitch, but they will lose their reason."[6] Indeed, one can see the disturbing pangs of conscience at work in Erkel himself growing almost imperceptably as the train carries away the idol upon whom he has been leaning for support.

Shatov is another who has depended upon an idol. His kind of idol-worshiping is made distinct from that of the youthful Erkel; it seems to come from his nature rather than from his youth. The idea of socialism and the personality of Stavrogin have taken hold of him so that he must suffer continually from both sources. Strangely enough, it is Shatov who sees all the vileness of Stavrogin's nature and even dares to put it in words to Stavrogin, yet he still says, "Shan't I kiss your footprints when you've gone? I can't tear you out of my heart, Nikolay Stavrogin!"[7] Between Shatov, the "radical with a tender heart",[8] and Stavrogin one sees one of Dostoevsky's intensive relationships. Not to be able to tear from one's heart the man who has abducted one's sister and one's wife as well as committed a number of less personal though more atrocious crimes is

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[5] Ibid., p. 589.

[6] Loc. cit.

[7] Ibid., p. 237.

[8] Joseph Collins, The Doctor Looks at Literature (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 88.

surely to have a strong attachment for him! Yet so intense is Shatov's hate that he strikes him in the face - not because of the outrage to his wife and sister but because of the fact that Stavrogin has allowed himself to fall from his pedestal! As a sequence to these reactions, is it surprising that Shatov welcomes back his much-loved though wanton wife and helps her bring Stavrogin's child into the world with as much joy and solicitude as if it had been his own? Perhaps the very fact that the child is Stavrogin's increases its value for Shatov. The soft heart that retains compassion and love for the straying wife is the cause for apprehension on the part of the members of the society; it places Shatov in a position apart from the rest of the workers and leads him to try to withdraw from an organization from which safe withdrawal is an impossibility. And so the luckless man must be murdered just after the reunion with his wife, when betrayal is furthest from his mind. Not a criminal is Shatov, but a man from whom convictions, once rooted, are not to be removed; he thus becomes entangled with people and movements which are a far cry from from his original conception of them.

Kirillov, who is so important and yet so uncertain a tool in the hands of the revolutionists, has a theory of his own, or perhaps one should say that the theory has him. He serves as an example of the not uncommon abnormality of obsession. An idea which has undoubtedly entered many minds

has entered his to stay and has swept everything else before it. By making the possessor of such an abnormal onesidedness and epileptic, Dostoevsky has made him more convincing. Of epilepsy Dr. Collins says, "Nothing is known of its causation or of its dependency, and all that can truthfully be said of the personality of the epileptic is that it is likely to display psychic disorder, evanescent or fixed."[9] Kirillov is not recognized by the world in general as an epileptic, but he has the symptomatic "moments of the eternal harmony",[10] the psychic disorder, and even the characteristic child-like smile that are characteristic of the disease. Perhaps, had he not been deprived of an orthodox belief in God, he would rise to the heights of a Myshkin instead of being limited to a contemplation of the reasons people do not dare to commit suicide. He recognizes the difference between himself and other men: "Everybody thinks and then at once thinks of something else. I can't think of something else. I think all my life of one thing. God has tormented me all my life, . . ."[11] Somewhere he has found a belief: "He who kills himself only to kill fear will become a god at once."[12] And along with this goes the conviction that everything is good if only the people will

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[9] Ibid., p. 71.

[10] Dostoevsky, The Possessed, op. cit., p. 554.

[11] Ibid., p. 106.

[12] Ibid., p. 105.

see it as good. The application of the latter principle can become either a guiding light as it does with Father Zossima or it can become a rationalization as it does with Stavrogin, who finds the most gross and ugly as gratifying as the sublime. Although it is for his own reasons, Kirillov becomes agent for Pyotr Stepanovitch by committing suicide and writing a note which is expected to throw the blame for Shatov's murder on him rather than on the real murderers. No doubt the rigidity and fixed stare which the frantic Verhovensky sees just before the suicide are indications of one of the epileptic's moments of divine vision which give him the necessary courage to shoot himself and become God through the obliteration of fear.

Few of Dostoevsky's characters so well testify to the novelist's extraordinary ability to delve into the realm of abnormal psychology as does Nikolay Stavrogin. One cannot help but wonder what would have been the result if this hero had been made the center of a better-integrated book than The Possessed. As it is, the character claims attention and interest, but he has many gaps in his personality beyond what would be justifiable for the sake of clothing him in a certain amount of mystery that would maintain reality. Myshkin is never laid bare completely, but he always holds the central position of the story. Despite the long divergences from the immediate concerns of Stavrogin, the facts known about him when pieced together still make a fascina-

ting structure of convincing abnormality. Without doubt the material which was originally connected with the book and later appeared separately as "Stavrogin's Confession" would fill many of the gaps in the story, but since this material is not included in the present form of the book, it will be considered only through the hints of it which still remain. From the first accounts of Stavrogin one can draw no other conclusion but that he is depraved - a word which covers almost anything. But how else can one explain away the unprecedented acts that he performs: actually pulling a dignified gentleman by the nose before a large company just because the gentleman had boasted that he could not be led by the nose, kissing Liputin's wife on impulse at a party in the presence of the husband and all the guests, and then biting the governor's ear instead of confiding to him what had driven him to his other peculiar outrages? This behavior is more or less explained away as a prelude to a siege of brain fever, and Nikolay is sent abroad for over three years.

When he returns, he is met by a motley gathering in his mother's house, including the "hemiplegic idiot"[13] who is thought to be his wife. In this scene he is the true hero in every respect: handsome, polite, charming, kind, and yet mysterious; Hollywood could ask for no more. The blunt

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[13] Collins, op. cit., p. 87.

question by his mother as to whether he is married to the unfortunate woman meets only with a dumb-show answer, but a very impressive one: "At last he smiled, a sort of indulgent smile, and without answering a word went quietly up to his mother, took her hand, raised it respectfully to his lips and kissed it."[14] In his attitude toward Marya Timofyevna he inspires nothing but admiration (with perhaps a few mental reservations) in the reader.

> "You should not be here," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch said to her in a caressing and melodious voice; and there was the light of an extraordinary tenderness in his eyes. He stood before her in the most respectful attitude, and every gesture showed sincere respect for her.[15]

Gradually, however, the skeletons begin to emerge from the closet of Nikolay Stavrogin. Even without the information in "Stavrogin's Confession" it is perfectly clear by the paleness and hesitation of Stavrogin that he is guilty of all the things with which Shatov charges him. Dostoevsky has made it as good as fact that it is true that Nikolay has ". . . decoyed and corrupted children."[16] In fact, the perversion behind all of the queerness of this man is shown to the reader through the hints and questions of Shatov:

> "Is it true that you declared that you saw no distinction in beauty between some brutal obscene action and any great exploit, even the sacrifice of life for the good of humanity? Is it true that you have found

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[14] Dostoevsky, The Possessed, op. cit., p. 169.

[15] Loc. cit.

[16] Ibid., p. 236.

identical beauty, equal enjoyment, in both extremes?"[17] The inevitable conclusion is that Stavrogin is sexually perverted. He is not an unheard-of phenomenon in the medical world. While his independence and unconventionality make him a sort of outward symbol for all of the socialists' most radical ideas, his motives are found in an entirely different quarter. Shatov has left open another possible explanation of Stavrogin's behavior, in that he has pronounced him a snob who is so bored with life that he tries to find some new diversion in committing outrages of various sorts. If this boredom enters into the picture at all, it seems more likely to be merely another manifestation or result of an inherent abnormality. Stavrogin is well analyzed by Dr. Collins as:

> . . . an unfortunate creature whose most important fundamental instinct was perverted and who could get the full flavour of pleasure only by inflicting cruelty, causing pain, or engendering humiliation.[18]

Thus, in this light, the tenderness of Stavrogin towards Marya Timofyevna is also seen as a horrid distortion; it is the manifestation of another accompanying perversion in the form of a desire for martyrdom and self-humiliation.

One comes almost to the point of deciding that the one virtue of Stavrogin is his truthfulness. After all, he is not going to disown the unfortunate idiot wife forever,

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[17] Loc. cit.

[18] Collins, op. cit., p. 86.

for he tells Lizaveta Nikolaevna in public with unconcerned frankness that Lebyadkin's sister has been his wife for almost five years. Similarly, when Liza is frantic to know whether he is guilty of the murder of his wife or not, Stavrogin refuses the excuse and evasion Verhovensky offers him and tells her frankly his part in the crime. Nor does he overestimate himself at the very end of the book in his letter to Dasha; he is painfully truthful. But unfortunately even truthfulness is not a normal impulse of goodness with Stavrogin. It is part of his plan for expiation, which finally ends in suicide. The very fact that, although a number of women fall in love with him, he can never love any normal woman on a normal basis is testimony to the fact of a sexual perversion. Perhaps the collection of so many abnormal desires in one man seems fantastic. But Dostoevsky has presented them in a convincing cause-and-effect relationship: because of the guilt he feels for his sadistic tendencies he works out a system of punishment for himself, which instead of making him more miserable gives him a certain sense of satisfaction with which to ward off the humiliation.

The character of Stavrogin, as has been seen, probably fits more with the consideration of abnormality than with that of criminality, but he cannot well be too far separated from the discussion of the men who try so hard to make of him an idol or tool for their socialistic plans. A

man from the highest stratum of society who stoops to such vile deeds and low company, whatever his motives, cannot escape the attention of these men. To a certain extent the interest is mutual, as Stavrogin has found a kindred spirit in the violence of these revolutionists and even lets himself expound some of their ideas, but Stavrogin's crimes are committed for personal satisfaction with no idea, however mistaken, of the good of ~~the~~ society.

In Svidrigaïlov as an individual character of Crime and Punishment Meier-Graefe sees a hint of the whole atmosphere of The Possessed.[19] Perhaps one can see in him even more of the Karamazov nature. He is plainly the sensualist. Yet, although Svidrigaïlov is consumed by passion for Dounia, he is a far cry from the rash, impulsive Dimitri. Like Stavrogin, he has skeletons in his closet, but they are never completely revealed to the world; he has none of Stavrogin's passion for confession to the public. Having presumably poisoned his own wife in order to track Dounia to Petersburg, he proves himself capable of the coolest sort of waiting, scheming, and manipulating. In many ways he is the wily, detestable villain, and stands in marked contrast to the hero-villain, Raskolnikov. He seems to stop at no device, however low, to win his object: from listening at doors to find out Raskolnikov's secret to using this knowledge to

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[19] Julius Meier-Graefe, Dostoevsky, the Man and his Work (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), p. 140.

force Dounia's hand. Failing this, he is apparently ready to take her by sheer force. Momentary as it is, one cannot help admiring the courage and sportsmanship which he displays in the face of Dounia's firing and the generosity, of which he urges her to take instant advantage, that prompts him to give her the key to the door. Before this event which convinces Svidrigaïlov that nothing will ever induce Dounia to have any feeling for him but hate, there has been a hint that he is going to make a "journey"[20], although he may decide to get married instead. After Dounia's gun misses fire, Svidrigaïlov plans the short remainder of his life and his suicide with as much care as he has been planning to win Raskolnikov's sister. He seems to take a perverse and cynical pleasure in providing for Raskolnikov along with Sonia's family and his betrothed before his death. Indeed, Svidrigaïlov muses to himself, "I never had a great hatred for any one, I never particularly desired to revenge myself even, and that's a bad sign, a bad sign, a bad sign."[21] It is indeed a bad sign, and it leaves little alternative to the choice of committing suicide. Even if eternity is ". . . one little room, like a bathhouse in the country, black and grimy and spiders in every corner"[22], of which the

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[20] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.), p. 279.

[21] Ibid., p. 476.

[22] Ibid., p. 275.

ghosts that appear to him when he is in an unwell state are representatives, it is still better for Svidrigaïlov to find out quickly rather than to remain in suspense. To love Svidrigaïlov is next to impossible, but sympathy and admiration must gradually grow for him in the reader's mind toward the end of the book.

Another suicide figure, but one who progressively loses the sympathy of the reader, is Smerdyakov of The Brothers Karamazov. At first the inclination is to feel sorry for the unfortunate epileptic, although he is always a repulsive creature. Through him Dostoevsky adds another bit to his unprecedented description of the manifestations of epilepsy.

> Not only are the disease and its manifestations described, but there is a masterly presentation of the personality alteration which so often accompanies its progress. In childhood he is cruel, later solitary, suspicious, and misanthropical. He has no sense of gratitude and he looks at the world mistrustfully.[23]

This is the man who chooses Ivan as his idol, and who translates Ivan's wishes into deeds. Dostoevsky has prepared the reader for the acts of Smerdyakov. Casually but significantly he has described him as one who stands "contemplating" and professes not to know what he has been thinking. He is like the peasant in the painting called "Contemplation", who apparently thinks of nothing.

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[23] Collins, op. cit., p. 80.

> Yet probably he [the peasant] has hidden within himself, the impression which has dominated him during the period of contemplation. . . . He may suddenly, after hoarding impressions for many years, abandon everything and go off to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage for his soul's salvation, or perhaps he will suddenly set fire to his native village, and perhaps do both.[24]

Smerdyakov has been hoarding all sorts of impressions: of Ivan's lack of belief and morality, of Ivan's ardent desire for the death of his father, and of all the little details that will make possible the perfect crime, if the criminals can only have confidence in it. The epileptic informs Ivan of the whole plan of the murder by clever insinuations, and feels out Ivan's reaction to it. By telling Ivan why and how Dimitri might commit the crime, he is of course outlining the way the case will appear to the outside world, and thus the evidence that will save the real murderers and convict Dimitri. Clever as Smerdyakov is, he has not been right in his estimation of Ivan, in that he has seen only the one side - the side that works in theory but not so well in practice. Although the details are the suggestion of the butler, one cannot help but feel that the true instigator is Ivan and that Smerdyakov has been badly treated by his adopted master.

When the conscience of Ivan torments him with hallucinations, sympathy swings over to Ivan and leaves little more than aversion for Smerdyakov. The latter has been true

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[24] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), pp. 130-131.

to himself, his plans, and to the worse side of Ivan, but he apparently has no other side of his own. The worship that Smerdyakov has heretofore had for Ivan turns necessarily to hatred, so that the feeling becomes mutual. Here one sees the intensity of hatred which results from an excessive mutual dependence. There is little more to say of Smerdyakov. When the idol for whom he has given up his life fails him by showing, instead of infinite gratitude, an unwillingness to admit even the original desire and an anguish which must end in insanity, there is nothing left for Smerdyakov but suicide. He does not seem to have changed or repented, but the object of his crime has changed; his idol has simply disappeared, what is left of the Ivan in whom he believed being merely the hated destroyer of that idol.

Ivan, for his part, is the most unfortunate of the brothers. In him is an incompatible mixture. His nihilism and excessive intellect will not allow him to live at peace with the world, and his typically Karamazov passion for life will not allow him to put a bullet through his head. To Alyosha he confesses his love of life:

> ". . . if I didn't believe in life, if I lost faith in the woman I love, lost faith in the order of things, were convinced in fact that everything is a disorderly, damnable, and perhaps devil-ridden chaos, if I were struck by every horror of man's disillusionment - still I should want to live and, having once tasted of the cup, I would not turn away from it till I had drained it!"[25]

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[25] Ibid., p. 241.

It almost seems that this is the plight he is in when he utters these words, for the three stories that he relates to Alyosha are indicative of the young man who has already lost all faith in everything. All that remains is an unreasoned love for certain things about nature and for certain individuals. There is no God, no power, no authority for him beyond himself. This nihilistic side of Ivan sanctions the disposal of a creature so abhorent to him as is his father and it is sufficiently dominating at the time of the significant conversation with Smerdyakov to allow him to go away at the butler's suggestion, knowing that the murder will take place. Yet the better nature of this double character is at work even at this moment to the extent that he is outwardly enraged and shocked at Smerdyakov. So chagrined is the more honorable Ivan at the consciousness of the part he has played in the crime, that he does a fair job of convincing himself that neither Smerdyakov nor he had anything to do with it and that Dimitri is really guilty. It is a case of wishful thinking that has almost led to belief. No doubt the Freudian explanation of this self-deception would be in terms of a relegation of the feelings of guilt to the subconscious level. Thus, the subconscious emerges in the form of a double in his hallucinations. At any rate, the mental conflict and break-down of Ivan falls in line with other similar cases. The technical explanation in yard-long terms of Ivan's condition would mean little to the average novel-reader, but Dr. Collins has testified to the accuracy of

Dostoevsky's ability as psychologist in the following simple tribute:

> Description of the visual hallucination which Ivan has in the early stages, that a "Russian gentleman of a particular kind is present," and the delusion that he is having an interview with him, might have been copied from the annals of an asylum, had they been recorded there by a master of the narrative art.[26]

It would seem that Ivan's early prophesy to Alyosha has come true at the end of the book. He has become convinced that the world is a terrible chaos, yet he does not want to turn away from it. What a blessing for Ivan if he could find as simple a way out as Smerdyakov has found! Smerdyakov has never had a love for life, and therefore it is no task for him to part with it.

There seems no fitting way to describe Raskolnikov of Crime and Punishment but as another double character. The man who has the generous impulse to help Marmeladov's family, who is so solicitous about his sister's welfare, and who has compassion for the unknown woman in the park, is certainly not the same person who murders the pawnbroker as a theoretical experiment. Beside Ivan, Raskolnikov looks slightly immature or naïve. At least, Ivan has a personal reason or emotion to prompt him to sanction the murder of his father. One would like better to believe that Raskolnikov has committed murder to get money from a worthless old woman and

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[26] Collins, op. cit., p. 82.

bestow it on his family or humanity in general; failing that, one would have him do it to improve his own circumstances, or even out of a personal aversion for the pawnbroker. Most people are Sonias in this respect. But Raskolnikov insists to Sonia, "I only wanted to have the daring, Sonia!"[27] Later he tries to elaborate to her upon his reason:

> "I wanted to find out then and quickly whether I was a louse like everybody else or a man. Whether I can step over barriers or not, whether I dare stoop to pick up or not, whether I am a trembling creature or whether I have the right. . . ."[28]

Thus Raskolnikov is really presented as the worst of Dostoevsky's criminals from a moral point of view. Many are willing to forgive the man who takes his own life, as he takes something which in a way belongs only to himself, and many will also forgive the man who murders for an unselfish, a passionate, or depraved reason. What about the student who decides with apparent coolness and deliberation that he will make two other human beings involuntary guinea pigs for his own personal experiments? It is nihilism carried to the extreme.

In Crime and Punishment Dostoevsky has made his main concern the analysis of the workings of the criminal's mind both before and after the crime. Perhaps it is the inclusion of so many details as much as anything that makes the

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[27] Dostoyevsky, Crime and Punishment, op. cit., p. 394.

[28] Ibid., p. 395.

analysis so wonderfully convincing. One does not have to have contemplated a crime to be familiar with the thought that crosses Raskolnikov's mind: "So the sun will shine like this then too!"[29] Any big or dreaded ordeal brings forth such feelings of surprise that the world will go on after the event is over. It is another stamp of reality that, in spite of the increasing finality of his resolutions, ". . . he never for a single instant all that time could believe in the carrying out of his plans."[30] So impressed does he become with the power of his own decision that he begins to be superstitious, and takes the references to the pawnbroker that he overhears as a special sign to him.

The punishment which Raskolnikov undergoes in the reader's presence is very real, but is not a form of repentence. Not until he is outside of the reader's scope of vision in Siberia does repentence become a factor in his punishment. Fear is what haunts Raskolnikov. He finds himself vacillating between a purely animal fear of being discovered and a desire to end the unbearable suspense by giving himself up and confessing. Beyond a certain point Raskolnikov cannot stand up against the diabolical, rat-trapping "psychology" of Porfiry Petrovitch, es-

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[29] Ibid., p. 5.

[30] Ibid., p. 68.

pecially when the pleadings of Sonia are added to it.

An especially convincing bit of psychology in the characterization of Raskolnikov is his reaction to Sonia and his mother and sister. Were there no one to lay claim on his better nature, he would have no uncomfortable feelings, perhaps. No one likes to feel indebted to someone else, particularly when one has something to hide. Nor is one apt to love virtue in someone else when one has lost it oneself. Of his mother and Dounia, Raskolnikov says, "Mother, sister - how I loved them! Why do I hate them now? Yes, I hate them, I feel a physical hatred for them, I can't bear them near me . . ."[31] In order to relieve himself, he opens his heart to Sonia, and thus puts her temporarily in the class of the "hated-loved" ones also. "Yes, he felt once more that he would perhaps come to hate Sonia, now that he had made her more miserable."[32] Fortunately, the loyal Dounia is prevented from sacrificing herself and is allowed to live her own life, and Sonia proves the salvation of Rodya by following him to Siberia and offering him her unquestioning love. Incidentally, the potentially happy ending of this book is unusual with Dostoevsky, and is made possible only by the presence of Sonia and the other, more natural side of Raskolnikov's

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[31] Ibid., p. 262.

[32] Ibid., p. 401.

character which the reader has never for a moment been allowed to forget. It is to Dostoevsky's credit that he has made, through a detailed analysis of the workings of the mind, one of the least justifiable of all his criminals at the same time one of the most attractive and realistic of his creations.

Different as the individuals discussed above may be, they are all "possessed" by a nihilistic idea or philosophy. And this denial, whether it is connected with revolutionary schemes, mental abnormality, or mere excess of theorizing, is at the root of their murders, suicides, and revolutionary coöperation. There is a class of criminals or would-be criminals in Dostoevsky's works, however, in whom nihilism is incidental if it is present at all. These men are driven rather by hatred, jealousy, or passion.

Dmitri of The Brothers Karamazov is, strictly speaking, perhaps no criminal. Although convicted of the murder of his father, he is not guilty of the actual crime. Yet Dmitri himself is at a loss to explain how it happened that he did not kill his father; all he can say afterward is, "God was watching over me then."[33] - seemingly surprised that the physical repulsion and jealousy which the old man inspired in him did not cause him to use the pestle which he had drawn out of his pocket for the purpose. There is little

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[33] Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, op. cit., p. 421.

reason in anything that this man does. Life for him is to a large extent the following of one impulse after another, so that if a nobler impulse is the dominant one of the moment the outcome is entirely different from what it is if a baser impulse is the dominant one at the moment.

Beneath the exterior of the charming rake in the officer's uniform, which somehow suggests Rhett Butler of Gone With the Wind, is seen much of the child in Mitya. He, like so many other characters of the book, chooses Alyosha as his confessor, and reveals to him his childishness, older brother though he is. His uncertainty of himself is naïvely humorous: "Don't think I'm only a brute in an officer's uniform, wallowing in dirt and drink. I hardly think of anything but of that degraded man - if only I'm not lying. I pray God I'm not lying and showing off."[34] All the brothers make much of the"Karamazov blood". Mitya tries to explain to Alyosha in the same confession that the degraded man mentioned above from a certain poem he has learned by heart does not stay with him. He has read the poem over many, many times:

> "Has it reformed me? Never! For I'm a Karamazov. For when I do leap into the pit, I go headlong with my heels up, and am pleased to be falling in that degrading attitude, and pride myself upon it. And in the very depths of that degradation I begin a hymn of praise.[35]

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[34] Ibid., p. 108.

[35] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

This is the general temperament of the oldest Karamazov brother; his life leads him from one passion to another. He is strangely unlike Ivan, who has worn himself out with thinking and is loath to accept anything without knowing the reason why it is so. Yet a certain underlying gallantry or morality prompts him at the last moments sometimes, so that he allows the haughty Katerina Ivanovna to leave his room unmolested with his gift of five thousand roubles, and does not kill his father, who is competing with Dmitri for the favor of the same mistress.

Much as Dmitri talks to Alyosha of his degradation in the moral sense, he admits at the same time his reveling in it. But the real humiliation for Mitya comes through an entirely different kind of degradation through which the police investigators put him. To admit himself an unprincipled rake is not a hard task for this man; indeed, he takes a certain pride in the fact, bolstering his ego by the consciousness of his personal form and charm and his way with women. What, then, when such a man is made to undress before a group of lowly peasants and reveal his ugly big toes and his dirty underwear? That is the sort of humiliation that is almost too much for the proud Mitya.

The familiarity of Dmitri with his own rash nature and his inability to explain why he did not commit the murder which he certainly had several times intended and threatened, almost drive him to think he must be guilty.

How can such a thing be coincidence: that an act from which one barely restrains one's hand is obviously performed as if one had not restrained oneself from the additional one or two movements that would have been necessary? It is no wonder that the unfortunate man cannot convince the court of his innocence. Yet D\mitri is not the one to lose his mind under the strain. Nor is his spirit broken. Even his love for Russia, the Russia that he believes is tired of him, is strong as ever. With the same old enthusiasm he relates his plans to Alyosha: he will escape from prison with the help of Katya, he and Grusha will go to America until the affair has blown over, then they will return to their own beloved country, disguised if necessary, and spend the rest of their lives in a remote corner of Russia. Whether D\mitri's plans work out or not, one knows that nothing will kill the immense love of life that he has inherited in the sensual Karamazov blood.

Beside D\mitri, the perverse man with the crape on his hat in The Eternal Husband is surely a pigmy figure. Yet he deserves consideration, and his motives are similar to D\mitri's, greatly watered down and strangely perverted. It would be strange indeed if the emotion of jealousy were as strong nearly ten years after the end of the conditions which could arouse any suspicions. Pavel Pavlovitch turns up to haunt the seducer of his wife, and then seems uncertain just what he wants to do about it. He wants to effect some

sort of revenge, but just what sort? Surely he cannot have planned or counted on the fever and death of Liza, whom Velchaninov knows to be his own child rather than that of the husband. It is even hard to believe that he has premeditated the attempt to murder Velchaninov.

The relationship between the husband, Trusotsky, and the lover, Velchaninov, is explained more logically as one of Dostoevsky's intensified relationships, in which love and hate are so closely allied. There seems to be an invisible bond between them, one which borders on the mystic or telepathic. Velchaninov's part in this will be discussed in the next chapter. As to Pavel Pavlovitch, there is surely something abnormal about his reactions. Apparently, he is a man who cannot stand alone: better to be near an enemy for whom one can feel intense hatred than near no one at all. In his drunkenness he wants Velchaninov to kiss him. Is it symbolic to him, to humiliate the lover, or mere drunkenness? No, much as Trusotsky hates Velchaninov, he has not come merely for revenge. He needs and fears this man, and incidentally has some strange joy in humiliating himself even further before the men who have won from him the love of his wife. After Pavel Pavlovitch has gone to such pains to follow the funeral procession of Bagautov, who was another of his deceased wife's lovers, one cannot blame the exasperated Velchaninov for disgust at such a man whom he has called the "predatory type" sarcastically and to whom he must now define the term used.

> "The predatory type . . . is the man who would sooner have put poison in Bagautov's glass when drinking champagne with him in honour of their delightful meeting, as you drank with me yesterday, than have followed his coffin to the cemetry as you have to-day, the devil only knows from what secret, underground, loathesome impulse and distorted feeling that only degrades you!"[36]

The sliminess and unnaturalness of the husband makes it difficult to feel even pity for him. He is not man enough to act openly or even to make accusations against the other man. Instead, he insinuates, and relates a story of another meek man who stabs his enemy at the latter's wedding.

So unwilling is one to believe that Trusotsky has no open or definite plan for fighting Verhovensky, that when he seems to have his very heart set on his enemy's accompanying him to see his bride-to-be, one suspects a plot. Only such a man could hang on the opinion or prestige of his wife's lover to this extent, and not only have no ulterior motive, but allow himself to be made the fool by all the daughters of the family. Despite the humiliation which Pavel Pavlovitch has experienced, he shows great concern and solicitude for Velchaninov that very evening, when the latter suffers from an acute liver attack. But later in the night the tiger pounces, probably with little preliminary planning, and attempts unsuccessfully to cut Velchaninov's throat with a razor. Pavel Pavlovitch has struck, but he will always be

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[36] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Eternal Husband, from The Eternal Husband and other stories (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 65.

the "eternal husband". Not two years later he is again cringing before Velchaninov, hoping the lover will not decoy a second wife.

Rogozhin of The Idiot might be said to be almost a composite of Dimitri and Pavel Pavlovitch. He is hot-blooded like Dimitri, and certainly not the simpering, despicable type of Trusotsky; yet one cannot imagine Dmitri's waiting around so patiently while his lady alternately runs into and out of his arms! One passion dominates the life of Rogozhin, and that is to rule and possess Nastasya Filippovna. As Ganya is eliminated from the competition, Myshkin unexpectedly takes his place. The contrast between the temperaments of Myshkin and Rogozhin is remarkable. Again, there is a close relationship between these two men - a one-sided affair, since Myshkin's part in the struggle for Nastasya's affection is passive, almost reluctant, while that of Rogozhin is just the reverse. What sense can be made of the man who insists on exchanging crosses with Myshkin, takes him to receive the blessing of his aged mother, seems reluctant to receive his embrace, and then does so warmly, with what sounds like a renunciation of Nastasya: "Well, take her then, since it's fated! She is yours! I give in to you! Remember Rogozhin!"[37] These words sound

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[37] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 222.

like those of a man who may simply vanish or who may be driven to suicide. But no. Instead, he follows Myshkin and is about to murder him, when one of Myshkin's fits terrifies and sends away the would-be murderer. He is attracted by the personality of the epileptic and realizes that any trouble that may come from him will be only because of Nastasya's reaction to him; he and Myshkin, in fact, have much in common. But pure jealousy has no reason, no object but to exterminate the interfering person.

It is not only toward Myshkin that Rogozhin is developing murderous impulses. When Myshkin has seen Rogozhin only once and nothing of Nastasya Filippovna but her picture, he answers a question of Ganya's about the pair with intuition and foresight that could be convincing in no one's mouth but Myshkin's: "Marry her! he might to-morrow, I dare say he'd marry her and in a week perhaps murder her."[38] Probably Myshkin is not just prophet. If he can see the true characters behind the faces of these two people, he can very likely see the logical outcome of their relationship. Many a man has endured years of suffering at the hands of a woman he loves, strengthening with each rebuff or hurt from the woman his determination to make her pay when he has her at last in his power. Fortunately, most men do not have Rogozhin's intensity of passion, and most women do not have

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[38] Ibid., p. 33.

Nastasya's faculty for tantalizing. The necessity of getting Nastasya has become an obsession with Rogozhin, but his passion has been whetted and abused to the point where it must eventually end in violence. Hate has taken the place of love, and Rogozhin's mind has been consumed by both. Things could not end otherwise for such a man put through such tortures from within and without; it is doubtful if Dmitri would have stood up any better under similar circumstances, and Rogozhin has perhaps more of the Karamazov nature than any of the Karamazovs.

Dostoevsky's criminals, although superficially segregated here, are far from melodramatic "bad men". They are indistinguishable, in some cases from the mentally abnormal and in other cases from the normal and "good men", except for circumstances which have led them to make particular use of their potentialities. There are reasons, mistaken or otherwise, behind all human action: and it is in these reasons, in the workings of all types of minds, that Dostoevsky's interest lies. No man is <u>just</u> bad, but he is bad for certain reasons, in certain ways, and to a certain degree.

CHAPTER IV

RANGE OF ABNORMALITY

While Dostoevsky's interest in the criminal is extensive, it is by no means confined to the criminal. What of the characters who have never seen the inside of a law-court and perhaps never thought of murder, suicide, or revolution? There are many such figures in his books, but even they betray a special concern on the part of the author - a concern with people who are not quite normal mentally. This fact has attracted both favorable and unfavorable attention from readers and critics. Dr. Collins is lavish with his praise of Dostoevsky's psychological insight, although he recognizes at the same time that the author's preoccupation with the abnormal has been a weakness as well as a strength in artistic character drawing, and that "All his heroes are more or less insane."[1] The admiration of Dr. Collins for Dostoevsky's handling of these "more or less insane" is expressed fully in a few words: "It is difficult for a psychiatrist, after reading Dostoevsky's novels, to believe that he did not have access to the literature of insanity or have first-hand knowledge of the insane, . . ."[2] Yet this is not to imply that all of Dostoevsky's characters are of the sort that

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[1] Joseph Collins, The Doctor Looks at Literature (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 1.

[2] Loc. cit.

should be found only in institutions. With the qualifying "more or less", Dr. Collins' term can be applied to the whole range of mental conditions from unquestionable insnaity to the minor or temporary mental quirks that enter the personality of almost every human being at some stage of his life. This range of mental unbalance will be noticed in the present chapter. It cannot be denied that Dostoevsky presents an unusually large number of abnormal characters, but there is more than this fact behind the general effect of abnormality in his books. He also sees and brings to light the abnormalities of the people who are accepted by most as normal or merely eccentric.

A number of hopelessly decrepit or deranged figures may be found among the minor characters. Rogozhin's mother sits in a little room with a companion and understands nothing that is said to her and says nothing herself. Apparently her only movements in acknowledgment of anyone's presence are smiling, nodding, and making the sign of the cross. She has sunk too far to make very interesting fictional study, and so the reader meets her only once. Similarly, the captain's family in The Brothers Karamazov is a sorry gathering which makes one feel that too much misery and distortion is crowded into the one-room peasant shack. The crippled wife of the captain, with a mind neither wholly sound nor wholly deranged, the hunch-back, withered-legged daughter, and the tubercular son serve Dostoevsky's purpose in impressing the misery of the peasant family on the reader. But, much as his

work has done in broadening human sympathies, Dostoevsky's realism does not extend to the spot-lighting of peasants. That step has been left to the Steinbecks and Cladwells.

Behind Father Ferapont of The Brothers Karamazov Dostoevsky sees more than a queer religious fanatic. What makes him a fanatic? A suspicion is aroused that perhaps this monk is not so crazy as he seems. Does he really see devils in corners, that he must chase them out? And does he really think he has a special power that enables him to communicate with the Holy Ghost? These questions are not answered, but the reader cannot help but wonder at the remarks of the monk that break out in the middle of an apparently serious religious discussion. A visiting monk is busily questioning Father Ferapont about the form in which the Holy Ghost appears to him and what it tells him. After a number of increasingly fantastic answers, Father Ferapont says to the last question, "Why, to-day he told me that a fool would visit me and would ask me unseemly questions. You want to know too much, monk."[3] Perhaps, after all, there are parties, politics, and schemes for advertising even in monasteries. Aside from his claims to phenomenal spiritual powers, this ascetic strongly suggests the masochist, with his dirty shirt, starvation diet, and thirty-pound irons under his coat that might even have pleased Thomas à Becket. Just which

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[3] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 176.

kind of abnormal pleasure motivates Father Ferapont is not made clear, but whether it is self-torture or the knowledge that others think him depraved, it is still abnormal.

Marya Timofyevna, the idiot whom Stavrogin marries for self-humiliation, is presented in some detail. Her talk is a strange mixture of sense and nonsense so typical of that sort of deranged mind. She recognizes people, talks to them quite pleasantly, yet can forget their presence and be seemingly ignorant of the conversation going on in the room with her, catching only a word here and there unless it is addressed directly to her. Shatov explains to the first person of the book (in her presence!): "She has some sort of nervous fits, almost every day, and they are destroying her memory so that afterwards she forgets everything that's just happened, and is always in a muddle over time."[4] Mercifully, her mind allows her to forget the beatings that her brother gives her; she is happy. Yet from the past she remembers apparently with great detail events that took place in a convent, including one of her own remarks that, "God and nature are just the same thing."[5] Keener minds have had worse conceptions of God! In the final scene between Marya Timofyevna and Stavrogin the idiot sprinkles in her jumbled talk a few

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[4] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Possessed (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 131.

[5] Ibid., p. 133.

terse characterizations of the dignified gathering she had seen at Stavrogin's mother's: Lizaveta's mother is ". . . simply an absurd worldly old woman"[6], and Stavrogin's own mother ". . . ought to be an abbess."[7] It is indeed an unexpected turn of events for Stavrogin when even the idiot-wife whom he has taken to punish himself proves to be keen enough to catch the mean expression of his face and thus turns him away as an imposter conspiring against the prince who married her five years ago!

Another character in The Possessed who exhibits unquestionable mental derangement, but of an entirely different kind, is Andrey Antonovitch. He is plainly driven mad by the constant pushing of his wife and Pyotr Stepanovitch. In his tirade with his wife the night before his madness becomes apparent to the world, he seems to have sized up the situation fairly accurately himself. He is temporarily ready to stand up to his wife (although he is again running after her the next day hoping for her forgiveness):

> "There cannot be two centres, and you have created two - one of mine and one in your boudoir - two centres of power . . . Our marriage has been nothing but your proving to me all the time, every hour, that I am a nonentity, a fool, and even a rascal, and I have been all the time, every hour forced in a degrading way to prove to you that I am not a nonentity, not a fool at all, and that I impress every one with my honourable character."[8]

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[6] Ibid., p. 255.

[7] Loc. cit.

[8] Dostoevsky, The Possessed, op. cit., p. 411-412.

This is, in fact, the very circumstance that has led the unhappy man to literal distraction. The next day, he is seen staring at flowers in a meadow, then ordering the flogging of the workers who come to him with a plea. By the time of the fête that his wife has so carefully planned, everyone is staring at him, recognizing his condition by the violence and incoherence of the few words that he utters. At the fire in the town he must be watched and keeps yelling wild orders; wild though the expression of it may be, he is not far from the truth in his frenzied, "It's all incendiarism! It's nihilism! If anything is burning, it's nihilism!"[9] And that is near the end of the governor's career; soon afterward he is hit on the head by a plank while trying to help an old woman rescue her feather bed and must go to an institution in Switzerland to recover his mental and physical health.

Again citing Dr. Collins, ". . . it would be difficult to find a more comprehensive account of adult infantilism than the history of Stepan Trofimovitch, . . ."[10] Certainly the reactions of Stepan Trofimovitch are those of a child. He has retained from the fancies of his childhood days delusions of a peculiar sort of grandeur. His fictitious world does not extend so far as that of Teddy Roosevelt in Arsenic and Old Lace nor as that of many Napoleons

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[9] Ibid., p. 482.

[10] Collins, op. cit., p. 62.

in various insane asylums, for this man knows who he is, but not what he is. To be an "exile"[11] and a "persecuted"[12] man is his one desire.

> All his life he sincerely believed that in certain spheres he was a constant cause of apprehension, that every step he took was watched and noted, and that each one of the three governors who succeeded one another during twenty years in our province came with special and uneasy ideas concerning him, which had, by higher powers, been impressed upon each before anything else, on receiving the appointment.[13]

The man is educated, even brilliant in many ways. He becomes a lecturer of some reputation, the tutor of Stavrogin, and the pet of Stavrogin's mother. Like many other childish adults, he needs someone to look after him. He spends his life getting enjoyment out of the childish practice of having squabbles with Varvara Petrovna and then making them up in long tearful letters. The end of Stepan Trofimovitch's life is as typically immature as the rest of it has been. He is like the small child who imagines that he is not appreciated at home, or that he must show that he can be independent and go out into the world with his own ideas. Stepan Trofimovitch trudges off proudly with his ideals, but soon picks up a young gospel-woman to care for him until Varvara Petrovna finds her dying runaway. It is typical of Dostoevsky that the interpretation of the figure of the swine of the Bible, already noticed earlier in this paper,

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[11] Dostoevsky, The Possessed, op. cit., p. 1.

[12] Loc. cit.

[13] Ibid., p. 2.

is left to this character who is virtually the child of the book.

The shorter novel, The Double, is devoted entirely to a study of the development of insanity through the course of hallucinations in the form of the alter ego. Before the appearance of the double, the actions of the titular councilor are as peculiar as his reasoning. He is constantly assuring himself and everyone else that he is all right and that there is nothing the matter, even though no one questions him on the point. After arranging for a special carriage and a special festive suit of livery for his boy, he sets out on an aimless jaunt, then decides to stop and call on his recently acquired doctor. The conversation with the doctor is really a muddled, incoherent affair, revealing only the fact that Golyadkin is suffering from the delusion that he is persecuted by enemies. He finally arrives somewhere to dinner, but is not admitted, after all his arrangements for an impressive coach to carry him there in style. The dinner-party given in honor of Klara Olsufyevna's birthday is presented to the reader through the muddled mind of Golyadkin, who watches and then attends the party uninvited. Nothing shows so clearly the little man's true condition, and at the same time makes him so pitiable a figure as does the half-realization that he has of his own trouble. In the midst of the snubs, cringes, and rudenesses of other people, he knows only that they think him queer.

> He made up his mind that it was better to keep quiet, not to open his lips, and to show that he was "all right," that he was "like every one else," and that his position, as far as he could see, was quite a proper one.[14]

Yet, left alone for a few minutes, he soon goes off into his own fancies of how he would rescue Klara Olsufyevna, should the chandelier fall on her!

Perhaps the loss of social prestige which the unfortunate man experiences on being put out of the party is the final stroke to cause the appearance of the double, of whom he had already had presentiments, he realizes now. So he is being persecuted by his enemies! At the first appearance of the double, he does question, "Why, have I really gone out of my mind, or what?"[15] The next step toward the triumph of the vision is when Mr. Golyadkin knows who the man is, yet will not admit to himself that he does. After this, Mr. Golyadkin accepts all too readily the reality and identity of the stranger, showing little evidence of doubting it except that he seems to feel that he must be ashamed of it. He is not like Ivan, who resorts to wet towels on his head and throwing teacups at his hallucination to make it disappear.

In the dream of Mr. Golyadkin there is very little to

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[14] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Double, from The Eternal Husband and other stories (New York:The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 168.

[15] Ibid., p. 175.

distinguish it from the daytime hallucination, except that, instead of one double to shame him and rob him of all honor and slander him, there are many doubles. The dream also admits one step in anticipation of the hallucination: the new Mr. Golyadkin convinces the world that he is the original and that the real one is an imposter. When this stage has been reached by the illusion in Mr. Golyadkin's waking hours, when the double has succeeded in convincing everyone that the true Mr. Golyadkin is an imposter, if indeed he exists at all, the mental breakdown of the poor man is complete. Apparently he is surprised by the doctor who takes him to the insane asylum. Yet, with the spark of sanity that always seems to lie just beneath the surface of insanity, Mr. Golyadkin suddenly realizes afterward that he has had a presentiment of this, just as he had a presentiment of the appearance of his unwelcome double.

While the usurer in the short story, A Gentle Spirit, is not in a class with Mr. Golyadkin, it would be a gross exaggeration to call him normal. He is a strange combination of sadist and masochist, but neither in the physical sense. Instead, he sets about torturing himself and his young wife in the spirit, which is infinitely worse. His first odd desire, after making a proposal by stressing all his faults, is to do everything in his power to prevent her from understanding him. Yearning for her love himself, he nevertheless takes delight in rebuffing her affection in the very beginning:

> That was my idea. I met her enthusiasm with silence, friendly silence, of course . . . but, all the same, she could quickly see that we were different and that I was - an enigma. And being an enigma was what I made a point of most of all![16]

Attempting to defend this course of action, the usurer says:

> I wanted her to find out for herself, without my help, and not from the tales of low people; I wanted her to divine of herself what manner of man I was and to understand me! Taking her into my house I wanted all her respect, I wanted her to be standing before me in homage for the sake of my sufferings - and I deserved it. . . .[17]

A strange sort of man who consciously acts a part and never expresses his true ideas because what he wants most of all is to have his wife find out what he is really like! It must be a sort of martyr-complex. He would rather let both suffer for years without understanding just for the joy of having his wife someday realize what a jewel she has married and how many years she has wasted by not appreciating his truly noble motives. He does not want happiness; he wants the anticipation of it.

Behind these warped desires is a cause, according to the usurer's tale, and a logical cause it is. His overly sensitive pride had been wounded through an unhappy circumstance and he had to give up his commission, and then went into the usury business. For the swallowed pride that will ever rankle in him after this descent in the world, a wife

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[16] Fyodor Dostoevsky, A Gentle Spirit, from The Eternal Husband and other stories (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 294.

[17] Ibid., p. 295.

is expected to atone. Without even being told of it, she is expected to make up for the injury that has been done to him by others. It would take a second-sighted or telepathic person to divine what is wanted in a case like this.

How human is the plaint of the usurer now that his wife is dead! He says he sees his mistake now - as so many think when it is too late. "That is what is wrong, that I am a dreamer: I had enough material for my dreams, and about her, I thought she could wait."[18] Yet, by his defence of himself, he makes it perfectly plain that he would act no differently now. In fact, although the fear of losing her during a previous long illness had made him temporarily sorry that he had not explained his peculiar way of loving before, the return of her health merely made him more eager than ever to put off the final occasion of revelation. Perverse creature that he is, only her final indifference awakens him to any immediate plans for action. Then explantions are too late to be believed, and the poor woman jumps from a window. The man claims to know his mistakes now, but apparently he only understands why his plans have not worked. It will alaways be beyond his comprehension that his passions are abnormal and self-centered so that no normal woman could be made to understand them except with loathing or pity.

It will not be necessary to say much of Velchaninov,

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[18] Ibid., p. 310.

as he has been unavoidably discussed to some extent in the consideration of Pavel Pavlovitch. It would never occur to anyone to call Velchaninov insane; probably he is as normal a man as any that could be found. Yet he is one of the people who illustrate Dostoevsky's propensity for finding out the flaw or weakness that would be overlooked by most.

Dostoevsky comes upon Velchaninov during the worst few months (but the most interesting months from this novelist's point of view) of his life. He is in Petersburg about a lawsuit, the outcome of which will determine whether he has or does not have a fortune for the rest of his life. No wonder he is in a state of depression and hypochondria! Man of the world that he has always been, he is suddenly bothered by all the feminine hearts he has broken and the boy whom he has crippled by shooting him in a duel - things that for all these years have given him scarcely any concern. And the thing which seems to worry him most is that he is sure that he would do all these horrible deeds again if he were placed in a similar position. Of course this period of spasmodic remorse and nervous depression is the time when Pavel Pavlovitch's unexpected appearance will have the most effect on Velchaninov. The latter is uncertain whether the little man with the crape on his hat disturbs his thoughts for some good reason or just becasue of his own mental condition. Yet he feels he must know him.

> And something seemed faintly stirring in his memory, like some familiar but momentarily forgotten word,

> which one tries with all one's might to recall; one knows it very well and knows that one knows it; one knows exactly what it means, one is close upon it and yet it refuses to be remembered, in spite of one's efforts.[19]

The dreams of Velchaninov have already ~~have~~ been noticed, especially for the foreshadowing effect of the three rings on the doorbell. Once the mystery has been cleared up, Velchaninov no longer appears so distraught. At least, when he is so frantic with Pavel Pavlovitch sleeping in his apartment, one learns later that he had good reason to be alarmed. Another quirk of Velchaninov's mind in his illness comes out in a terror of Pavel Pavlovitch's power over his mind. He feels himself almost under a hypnotic spell. The very morning after this man has attempted to murder him, Velchaninov is terrified in a way that is not physical.

> This new terror came from the positive conviction, which suddenly grew strong within him that he, Velchaninov (a man of the world) would end it all that day by going of his own free will to Pavel Pavlovitch. Why? What for? He had no idea and, with repugnance, refused to know; all that he knew was that, for some reason he would go to him.[20]

But Velchaninov is spared this meeting, as the would-be murderer has gone away; not until two years later do the two men meet, and then the temporary mental disturbance of Velchaninov has entirely disappeared. His fortune is secured, and he has become reinstated in the gay circles of society.

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[19] Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Eternal Husband, from The Eternal Husband and other stories (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 10.

[20] Ibid., p. 127.

Dostoevsky's women are nowhere near so strong as characters as are his men. But no study of the psychological powers of an author could be complete without some consideration of the women. For the most part, they can be put fairly easily into classes or types, although there are a few that cannot be so easily grouped and probably none that has not one or more individual characteristics.

There is an unmistakable class of "respectable" young ladies who serve as heroines and who might, except for small differences of circumstances, have been cut from the same pattern. In this group fall Aglaia of The Idiot, Liza of The Possessed, and to some extent both Katya and Lise of The Brothers Karamazov. They are all pampered, spoiled, and proud, with an hysterical note in almost all they do.

Aglaia's disconcerting changeability when one first makes her acquaintance may be laid partly to an intentional coquetry. She feels that her youth and social position entitle her, even obligate her, to be rude and unexpected in her remarks. Later, her fluctuating in regard to Myshkin is obviously the manifestation of her own inner struggle between love for the strange man and pride which makes her unwilling to commit herself beyond what he is willing to do on his part. Myshkin, one must admit, is enough of a riddle to drive any normal woman into hysterics. The unworldliness and spiritualness of Myshkin are in themselves an attraction; they mark him as something different, something above the

ordinary. Yet Aglaia is very ordinary herself in her instincts and reactions. While she wants Myshkin, she wants him changed in regard to herself. She cannot bear to realize that the very spiritual quality that makes her love him is the quality that will make it impossible for her to have the exclusive sort of love she requires from him. Yevgeny Pavlovitch tries to explain afterward to the naïve Prince Myshkin concerning Aglaia, "No, prince, she won't understand. Aglaia Ivanovna loved you like a woman, like a human being, not like an abstract spirit."[21]

Poor Liza, who is luckless enough to fall in love with Nikolay Stavrogin, is in as bad a position as Aglaia. The entrance of Stavrogin into his mother's drawing-room, where a number of people are assembled, causes Liza to make herself conspicuous by uncontrolled laughter. In her effort to cover this up, she begins talking wildly about breaking or losing her leg - anything to give her an excuse to give vent to her pent-up emotions. But apparently her instability is too great to end in any other way but in a genuine fit of hysterics, which forces her to leave the room. Throughout the book, every meeting with Stavrogin causes some peculiar outburst on her part; it is usually an overdone attempt to act extremely happy with her meek

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21 Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), p. 587.

lover, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, and entirely indifferent to Stavrogin. The effect, of course, is to make apparent her love for Nikolay Stavrogin and also her lack of emotional balance and control. Actually, this feeling for Stavrogin is perhaps more a horrible fascination than anything else. When she has thrown herself on this man's mercy and found that he does not love her at all, she is for the first time in the course of the book capable of calm, though bitter, analysis. She has been deceived as to his feeling for her, but never in the general nature of the secrets he has from the world. In their last meeting she tells Stavrogin:

> "I always fancied that you would take me to some place where there was a huge wicked spider, big as a man, and we should spend our lives looking at it and being afraid of it. That's how our love would spend itself."[22]

When a woman wants a man and yet has this picture of her future life with him, she must indeed prefer suffering and horror to happiness.

It is Lise of The Brothers Karamazov whom Dr. Collins calls "the true hysteric."[23] She frankly admits that it is not happiness that she wants, that she wants someone to make her suffer. She, like Liza in The Possessed, must cover her emotion by hysterical laughter. While her mother makes her confession to Father Zossima, Lise keeps laughing

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[22] Dostoevsky, The Possessed, op. cit., p. 491.

[23] Collins, op. cit., p. 62.

at Alyosha. She vacillates between writing passionate love-letters and being angry with Alyosha for taking them seriously, and between calling Alyosha to her as if their lives depended on each moment they are together and sending him away because he has offended her. Again, there is no stability. Lise's hysteria is so marked that one must wonder whether she is not suffering from much more than emotional immaturity or an exaggerated idea of the spirit of coquetry. She is sane when the reader sees her, but one feels that with much provocation, insanity would not be far around the corner.

Dr. Collins includes in his discussion of Dostoevsky a description of the psychopathic constitution, which he claims is the constitution of the novelist himself as well as of many of his character creations. These psychopathic people are distinguished by their abnormally violent and changeable emotions and by their self-centeredness, which prompts them to be anxious to talk about themselves and their ailments.[24] "Scores of his characters had such constitution, and in none is it more perfectly delineated than in Katerina Ivanovna, though Lise Hohlakov, of the same novel, had wider display of the hysteria that grew on this fertile soil."[25] Katya is more mature than Lise, and she does not have her mother to pamper her when she makes her appearance in the

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[24] Ibid., p. 67.

[25] Loc. cit.

novel. The source of Katya's changing and emotional behavior is the fact that she has acquired the notion that she is in love with Dmitri, a man to whom she would never have given a second thought if she had not been the recipient of one of the few chivalrous and gallant deeds that Dmitri has performed. Because a momentary generous impulse has made Dmitri give her all his money, she feels that she must give herself to him in payment. She will step from her lofty pedestal and marry him, even convincing herself that she loves him. Actually she is mistaking gratitude for love and allowing her self-centeredness and snobbishness to blind her to the fact that Dmitri does not really love her either. Katya has conceived a plan for self-matyrdom, apparently, and will let nothing interfere with the execution of the plan, even though both she and Dmitri have found someone else with whom they could be more happy.

All of these respectable young heroines will probably grow to be like Lizaveta Prokofyevna in The Idiot and Varvara in The Possessed, and that will be a welcome transition. For these middle-age aristocrats, who are incidentally also much of the pattern, are interesting and likeable figures. It would seem that the hysteria and giddiness of youth is changed with age into a good-hearted sentimentality which is hidden beneath a gruff exterior. Both of these older women still express themselves often by contraries, but they have developed the prestige and stability that enables them always to be frank when the occasion arises. Furthermore, they

have by this time established a code of behavior by which their true motives can be interpreted:

> "It had been noticed as an invariable rule in the family that the more obstinate and emphatic Lizaveta Prokofyevna's oppostion and objections were on any matter of dispute, the surer sign it was for all of them that she was already almost on the point of agreeing about it.[26]

It is only to be hoped that Lise will not grow in the likeness of her mother, the talkative Mme. Hohlakov. The latter is the hysteric who has become worse rather than more stable with the years. Her confession to Father Zossima is a confession from which she hopes not forgiveness, but rather, as the wise elder suggests and she admits, for praise of her frankness. She is one of the psychopathic individuals who get great enjoyment out of talking of their own problems and faults; she is overcome with the importance of all that concerns herself.

It is typical of the unconventionality of Dostoevsky that the mistresses and prostitutes are stronger and more interesting than the more socially acceptable ladies. These creatures are social outcasts just as are the men who are criminals or mentally unbalanced. Women are not just "bad". They have a story and reasons that should make them of special interest to the world.

Grushenka was seduced when she was nineteen, and has since taken to supporting herself by hiring herself out

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[26] Dostoevsky, The Idiot, op. cit., p. 509.

rather discriminately as mistress. Yet Dostoevsky is not satisfied to leave her as a woman merely led astray in her youth and paying for it the rest of her life. She seems to have queer objects and motives for her passions. The man who seduced her years ago she remembers not with anger or aversion, but with fascination. Apparently, she is a woman who is won by cruelty and finds herself enslaved by the man who has abandoned her. She goes to him at his bidding, although she speaks of her own action with contempt: ". . . he whistles! Crawl back, little dog!"[27] On the other hand, while it pleases Grushenka to be abused herself, she cherishes hopes of getting Alyosha into her power. She would like to feel that she could turn the heart of the monk-like Karamazov. It is another case of the desire to harm the virtue in another, because it awakens one's own conscience painfully. But when Alyosha goes to see her and is the first to treat her as an equal, she gives up her designs, confessing them in giving them up:

> "It's true, Alyosha, I had sly designs on you before. For I am a horrid, violent creature. But at other times I've looked upon you, Alyosha, as my conscience. I've kept thinking 'how any one like that must despise a nasty thing like me.'"[28]

Grushenka speaks as if the "designs" and the idea that Alyosha was her conscience are reactions that preclude

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[27] Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, op. cit., p. 381.

[28] Ibid., p. 373.

each other, but in all probability the latter idea is partly the cause of the desire to humble him. Dmitri, whom Grushenka thinks she has been using to save her from running back to her original officer, is really the one who is suited to her and whom she can love on a normal give-and-take basis. This she realizes during the wild party at Mokroe, and one feels that Grushenka will attach herself to Dmitri with all the fervor and twice the justification of her former attachment to her first seducer. For all her strange passions and her coarsenesses, Grushenka is a more lovable character than the proud Katya who shares heroine honors with her in the same book.

Nastasya of The Idiot is similar to Grushenka in her background and reputation, but she has added to her character a wildness which Myshkin is convinced is insanity. Instead of the almost involuntary enslavement seen in Grushenka for her seducer, Nastasya has become hardened and bitter with hatred for Totsky, who has kept and abused her since she was a child. Her suffering shows through the beauty of her face even in the painting which Myshkin sees before he sees Nastasya herself. It is this suffering face that appeals to Myshkin and that is Nastasya's power over him. Just as the freshness and equality in Alyosha's attitude toward Grushenka give Grushenka the feeling of a new and different kind of love, so the same quality in Myshkin's love for Nastasya gives her a joy she has never

known before. Here is a man who loves more than her body or the money he will get for marrying her; this man understands her and sees what she is really like. Impulsively, she offers at her party to let Myshkin decide whether or not she is to marry Ganya, and at his word she does not marry him. The rest of Nastasya's story is one of a struggle within her between the selfish desire to marry the one she loves (or perhaps it is more that she wants to show her power or elevate herself through Myshkin's belief in her) and the unwillingness to ruin Myshkin. Her choice seems to be between Rogozhin, whom she hates and who she knows more and more surely will murder her once he has attained his goal, and Myshkin, whom she is too unselfish to ruin. Until the meeting with Aglaia, Nastasya seems to be trying hard not only to renounce Myshkin, but to put him out of her reach by marrying him to Aglaia. Her endeavors in this direction may be, as Aglaia thinks, in order to satisfy an unhealthy desire for martyrdom. But it is not inconceivable that she really knows that her own marriage to Myshkin could end in nothing but unhappiness for both of them; if she is strong enough to give up the prince to Aglaia, at least there is the chance of his being happy. However, the unforgivable actions and contempt of Aglaia prove too much for Nastasya's pride. She will take Myshkin away now if only to spite the haughty Aglaia, and she does so. The wedding plans go forward and all is carried out in due order. She has proved her point. But on the

church steps she changes her mind for the last time and gives herself to Rogozhin. Nastasya's mind is racked by conflict, which finally drives her to a pitch not far from madness. She is one of the strongest of Dostoevsky's women.

If Nastasya ranks among Dostoevsky's strongest women, Sonia certainly stands among the most glorious. She is almost - not quite - too perfect to be convincing. In her there is none of the hysteria seen in the "respectable heroines", and none of the coarseness or bitterness of the mistresses. Sonia has been driven to prostitution for the sake of her family, and she takes this degradation with the humility and faith that she takes everything else. The reason that Sonia is not too good to be true is that her goodness and loyalty comes not from the decision to be good, but from a mental limitation as much as anything else. It is of course not true that "ignorance is bliss", but too much thinking and education and scheming can certainly cause infinite suffering. Sonia acts almost by instinct. Suffering in others makes her more unhappy than anything else, and the more unhappy the other person is, the stronger in her is the desire to help. She is a Christian, but of a different stamp:

> Undoubtedly she is a Christian, but her Christianity, like the symbolism of the drama, is beyond the reach of the common herd. Do not believe, if indeed you find such a thing possible! There is absolutely nothing to believe here, only eyes are necessary. You must live and must have reason for living. Pick

up the reason where you find it.[29]

Raskolnikov is in reality Sonia's reason for living that she has picked up. He is obviously the most miserable of men, and what better reason could she have for living than to help him and share with him? Love grows readily out of her concern and pity for him. Before Sonia's simplicity the theories and inflated ideas of Raskolnikov must eventually appear ridiculous to him. Sonia is an angel to Raskolnikov and a spark of light among the tortured souls of Dostoevsky's books to the reader.

For the most part, it would seem that Dostoevsky's men are criminal, perverted, or cruel and that his women are hysterical or so torn with conflict that they are hardly responsible for their actions. Velchaninov (despite his faults and his temporary depression) and Sonia stand out conspicuously for their normality and their lack of baseness. But there are two characters that may be singled out as Dostoevsky's ideals: Myshkin and Alyosha. Here are two men created by the novelist not to show the suffering and human quality in those scorned by society, but to present the truly good man.

Myshkin is epileptic. This is at once the misfortune that keeps his feet on the ground as one of Dostoevsky's suffering human beings and the distinction that allows him

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[29] Julius Meier-Graefe, Dostoevsky, the Man and his Work (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), p.131.

to soar above the earthly limitations of his fellows. From the moment of introduction his disease is made an integral part of him:

> His eyes were large, blue and dreamy; there was something gentle, though heavy-looking in their expression, something of that strange look from which some people can recognise at the first glance a victim of epilepsy.[30]

In Myshkin the manifestations of epilepsy are very different from those in Smerdyakov in The Brothers Karamazov, who was seen through the personality changes of his youth to be sullen, solitary, and ungrateful. Myshkin is subject to the moments of great light and insight which precede the attacks in some people. Kirillov in The Possessed speaks briefly of these experiences, but it is through the Idiot that Dostoevsky gives to the world a detailed account of these moments so familiar to the author himself:

> His mind and his heart were flooded with extraordinary light; all his uneasiness, all his doubts, all his anxieties were relieved at once; they were all merged in a lofty calm, full of serene, harmonious joy and hope.[31]

When Myshkin thinks these moments over in his normal condition, he decides that they are really worth the whole of his life, even though he is well aware that they are the symptoms of disease. He feels his own ability to put the feeling into words is sadly inadequate; it is even more than a feeling ". . . of completeness, of proportion, of reconcili-

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[30] Dostoevsky, The Idiot, op. cit., p. 2.

[31] Ibid., p. 224.

ation, and of ecstatic devotional merging in the highest synthesis of life."[32] He explains to Rogozhin that ". . . at that moment I seem somehow to understand the extraordinary saying that there shall be no more time."[33] Dostoevsky's handling of the insane is remarkable, but it is no wonder that Dr. Collins says, "If Dostoevsky had been insane, not epileptic, the literature of psychiatry would today be vastly more comprehensive."[34] What a boon to the workers in abnormal psychology if they could find a man as willing and able as Dostoevsky to report on the mental processes of insanity as Dostoevsky has done on those of epilepsy!

Most characteristic of Myshkin is his frankness and naïvete. One is never sure whether it is actually a gradual destruction of his mind by his epilepsy which returns him to a childish point of view or whether it is a Christ-like openness and simplicity. Perhaps, after all, the effect is much the same. He knows that other people consider him a child and an idiot, and cannot seem to make up his own mind whether or not they can be right. That he prefers the company of children to that of adults and that he once was very close to the state of idiocy he admits,

> "But can I be an idiot now, when I am able to see for myself that people look upon me as an idiot? As I come in, I think, 'I see they look upon me as

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[32] Ibid., p. 225.

[33] Loc. cit.

[34] Collins, op. cit., p. 317.

> an idiot, and yet I am sensible and they don't guess it.' . . . I often have that thought."[35]

On his first entrance into the world, perhaps it is natural that he should not know how to act. All he can depend upon to guide him is honesty and impulse, which do not always lead to diplomacy! Yet from him even the proud Aglaia does not seem offended that he finds her ". . . almost as beautiful as Nastasya Filippovna."[36] Although he is far from the braggart, he is frank to admit that he has often thought that he would live more wisely than anyone else. In anyone but Myshkin this would be obnoxious conceit.

In his openness, Myshkin seems to be gifted with an intuitive sense. While others are concerned with externals and conventions, this strange prince is reading an expression that creeps into someone's face in an unguarded moment. He thus undertakes to read the faces of the Epanchin daughters and that of Mme. Epanchin herself, and he sees the morbid passion in Rogozhin's face and the acute suffering in Nastasya's. One does not have to believe in prophetic power to accept Myshkin's ability to foretell Rogozhin's murder of Nastasya, his own submersion in the lives of those around him, and his breaking of the vase at the Epanchins' reception. When this last event takes place, he himself is awed: "It was not the shame of it, not the scandal, not the fright,

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[35] Dostoevsky, The Idiot, op. cit., p. 72.

[36] Ibid., p. 75.

nor the suddenness of it that impressed him most, but his foreknowledge of it!"[37] But actually Myshkin is like the blind who concentrate all their powers on the senses that remain to them and therefore hear many sounds that the average person does not notice. Myshkin, without knowledge of the workings of society, senses the inner emotions and reactions of people, and thus can sometimes predict the outcome which their expression will make inevitable.

As a lover Myshkin must be termed a failure. It is unfortunate that he inspires conjugal love in others and is capable of reciprocating only with a spiritual, Christian sort of love. Not that Myshkin is necessarily sexually impotent, although he is very likely undersexed. This man is perhaps retarded in his normal development by his long years of disease, but he has also had his energies diverted into other channels than the erotic. Undoubtedly he really does love both Aglaia and Nastasya at once and in different ways. Behind the indefinite little note that Myshkin sends Aglaia when he is away is the seed of a normal romantic love, but the seed is never given chance to germinate. Nastasya's face stands in the way. "That face, even in the photograph, had aroused in him a perfect agony of pity: the feeling of compassion and even of suffering over this woman never left his heart, and it had not left it now."[38] Gradually it is

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[37] Ibid., p. 550.

[38] Ibid., p. 350.

made clear to Myshkin that he cannot love both women at once, although he never seems to grasp exactly why. Instinctively, like Sonia, he has found someone who seems to be the most miserable person in the world and feels that that is where he is most needed. What claim has the untroubled gaity of Aglaia's face upon him when it is set beside the unbearable suffering of Nastasya's? Myshkin's failure as a lover is the fault of no one; it is inevitable. Aglaia and Nastasya are limited by human nature, and Myshkin is limited by the disease which both drags him below and enables him to transcend human nature.

Myshkin is epileptic, he is different from others in his reactions, and he is doomed to spend much of his life a true idiot. Yet Myshkin in his right mind is Dostoevsky's supreme creation. As the doctor observes of Myshkin, " . . . if every one like that were to be put under control, who would be left to control them?"[39] This figure, the Idiot, is fashioned ". . . after the poet's own heart."[40] He is also the closest to the heart of the reader; one must love him without reservations.

Alyosha, although he has much in common with Myshkin, stands apart from all of Dostoevsky's characters in that he has no outstanding vice or mental quirk, and has not even

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[39] Ibid., p. 592.

[40] Meier-Graefe, op. cit., p. 151.

the disease of Myshkin. Yet, perhaps for this very reason, he does not give the impression of being so vital to his creator as does Myshkin. The approach to Alyosha's character is quite the reverse of that to any other of Dostoevsky's heroes. Usually one is given a disreputable, depraved, or diseased man, and the problem is to find the spark of light in the midst of the darkness; here one is given an angel, and the problem is to establish his earthly substance.

The Alyosha that one meets at the beginning of The Brothers Karamazov has about him the innocent, untried goodness and faith of the boy who has led a so sheltered life, that his virtue means nothing. Father Zossima is his teacher and and his idol; and fortunately this man is an understanding teacher. Although Alyosha seems to want nothing but to spend the rest of his life in the monastery, the elder realizes that Alyosha's place, at least for the time being, is in the world of men and women. Indeed, the wild and frenzied activities in his own family keep Alyosha more than occupied even before the death of the aged elder. This boy must serve as balance wheel for an unusually unstable family. In the converstion between Dmitri and Alyosha, the latter surprises the older brother by insisting that he also is driven by the sensual lust of the Karamazovs. He compares himself to his brother in this respect by saying:

> "The ladder's the same. I'm at the bottom step, and you're above, somewhere about the thirteenth. That's how I see it. But it's all the same. Absolutely the same in kind. Any one on the bottom step is bound

to go up to the top one."[41]

There is no evidence in the course of the book that Alyosha is right in his prediction. In fact, one becomes more and more convinced that, whatever temptations Alyosha may have, his level-headedness and his kindness will save him from any misuse of his passions. The fact that he is tempted will enable him to understand others. When Father Zossima's body decomposes and does not perform the miracle in which Alyosha and many others believed, Alyosha in his disillusionment and despair allows Rakitin to take him to Grushenka. But in Grushenka, instead of a "low woman", he finds a "sister" who needs his help. It almost seems as if Alyosha has no time to think about losing his faith or his virtue; he is kept too busy using it in helping everyone else.

Alyosha may be a Karamazov, but it is hard to believe it when he arranges for his marriage with Lise in schoolboy fashion. He takes her letter of declaration seriously, despite her embarrassed protests. Now that she has called it to his mind, he sees it as a logical proposition; he will even love her someday!

> "As soon as I read it, [Lise's letter] I thought that all would come to pass, for as soon as Father Zossima dies, I am to leave the monastery. Then I shall go back and finish my studies, and when you reach the legal age we will be married. I shall love you. Though I haven't had time to think about it, I believe I couldn't find a better wife than

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[41] Dostoevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, op. cit., p. 111.

you, and Father Zossima tells me I must marry."[42] This is hardly a proposal to move the heart of the usual girl! Alyosha would do far better to go back to his monastery immediately than to undertake a marriage in this half-hearted condition. Fortunately, however, there is much suffering in store for him in the crimes and anguish of his brothers. He emerges with a faith which has been given meaning by suffering. His doctrine, like that of Father Zossima, is in the joy of living: "How good life is when one does something good and just!"[43] Alyosha can be considered only as a potential character, for not until the end of the book does one feel that he is ready to start living his own life. It must therefore stand that Myshkin, not Alyosha, is Dostoevsky's hero.

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[42] Ibid., p. 192.

[43] Ibid., p. 838.

CONCLUSION

Dostoevsky as an artist compares favorably with English and American psychological novelists. He has achieved a fair balance in the use of the various parts of fictional structure, not allowing any one element to destroy the others. In the matter of devices for presentation he proves himself a master technician. To portray character, he does not content himself with mere statement; he makes effective use of such things as facial expressions, dramatic dialogue, dreams, hallucinations, and confessions.

More important in the development of psychological fiction than Dostoevsky's artistry, is the content of his works. When novelists first realized that mental activity was as interesting as physical activity, and thus began centering their attention on the creation of convincing human beings, it was a big step in the elevation of psychology as a factor in literature. Men are still striving to find better means of portraying human nature in print; an author may well be pleased when one of his characters becomes to the reader almost as real as Mrs. Smith who lives next door. There is much to be desired in the world in the way of understanding among fellow creatures, and the novel has proved an invaluable supplement to many a man's inadequate store of first-hand experiences. Dostoevsky has not merely created individuals who are typical or easily understood. He has

put onto paper the many unappreciated and misunderstood people of the world. No human being is too abnormal, criminal, or diseased to be an interesting subject for fiction. Dostoevsky has presented the social outcasts whom he is able to understand, and leaves the way open for others to fill in the picture with the fruits of their experiences.

For too many centuries the common mind has been allowed to slumber under a snobbish and blind ignorance. Generalities and snap judgments have been too easily made. Men who commit certain stereotyped crimes have been hated as criminals; men who depart too radically from the usual, conventional behavior are scorned as "crazy" people. As if there were some sort of intangible but distinct line which has the power to damn those who fall on the wrong side of it! To Dostoevsky there are no lines; there are individuals. From Rogozhin's mother to Alyosha may seem a great advance in mental balance, but there is still in Rogozhin's mother the spark of intelligence that brings forth the sign of the cross, and in Alyosha the despair that sends him to Grushenka.

Into the creation of the human beings of Dostoevsky's books has gone so much sincerity and intensity of feeling that the reader cannot help being infected with the author's mood. With understanding one gains emotion - one aches to alleviate the torture and conflict of these unfortunate human beings. In other words, Dostoevsky has the rare gift of being able to write with the penetration of the dispassion-

ate and the passion of the unpenetrating. The result is that this Russian novelist is both psychologist and humanitarian. He has vastly extended the bounds of psychological fiction and thereby has also extended the bounds of human compassion.

ABSTRACT

What is the place of Dostoevsky among the psychological novelists of England and America? In the history of the novel in these two countries there can be traced a distinct swing toward the novel with a psychological emphasis. The mind becomes more and more a subject of interest.

Early eighteenth-century fiction is concerned with moral reform and breath-taking adventure, as exemplified by such writers as Richardson and Fielding. Uncle Toby emerges from the pages of Sterne's pen a little later as a unique creation, and by the end of the century Jane Austen has begun to demonstrate in Emma that a whole novel can be built pretty much on the character of one person. In the eighteen hundreds novelists in general become more prevalent, and character portrayal comes to the fore in the works of many more writers. James takes unprecedented delves into characters' minds and motives, while Dickens is experimenting in his last novels with the rudiments of abnormal psychology. The isolated figure of Heathcliff gives Emily Brontë a striking place in psychological fiction. George Eliot is a landmark in a study of this kind, as she is consistently masterful in her portrayal of the human kind, and serves as a convenient comparative figure in the discussion of Dostoevsky. Hardy with his blackness and Galsworthy with his brightness make the transition into the present century, both leaving the world a rich store of memorable and unusual characters.

After Dreiser's efforts in the direction of greater realism of character and life situations, come the writers like D.H. Lawrence and Sherwood Anderson who carry the Freudian psychology into literature and thus introduce sexual perversions as possible subjects for fiction. Faulkner stands alone in stream-of-consciousness of an idiot as a means of showing the decadence of the South. Stream-of-consciousness is the result of increasing desire to penetrate the workings of the mind, but while in many cases it succeeds in this, it usually entails a sacrifice of other essentials of the novel. Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf, two of the better stream-of-consciousness writers, have sacrificed plot to the carrying out of this technique; James Joyce, perhaps one of the most brilliant of authors, has broken all laws of literature to achieve his effects, but has placed his book beyond the reach of the average reader and made the validity of his psychological analysis questionable by his use of symbolism.

Since a psychological novelist must be novelist as well as psychologist, it is necessary to consider Dostoevsky first as artist. His plots are handled with varying degrees of success, but they cannot fairly be said to be sacrificed as are the plots of Richardson and Woolf. They are always there in the form of action to carry the characters along and hold interest. In The Brothers Karamazov the plot has suffered from the detailed attention given to so many of the characters, and in The Possessed it has disintegrated under the pressure of the theme. Even in these works, however, the fault is not so much in the weakness of the plots themselves

as in the massiveness of the other structures which have been placed upon them. Theme, usually that of atheistic nihilism as the basis for crime, does not prove a generally obtrusive factor except in The Possessed. In fact, neither plot nor theme is constantly weak nor bungled throughout his novels, although the character interest is strongest and thus makes justifiable a classification of Dostoevsky among the psychological novelists.

In point of view, Dostoevsky is a versatile technician, adapting his angle to the needs of each book and each character. He is largely on the inside in The Idiot and Crime and Punishment, where there is only one real main character; in The Brothers Karamazov he shifts from one to another of the brothers and sometimes to an outside position; and in The Possessed the angle is remote almost without exception. His methods of character portrayal are varied and effective, although not new or startling. Besides the conventional use of remarks from author to reader and of drama, he employs with great success dreams, hallucinations, and confessions. This last device is especially distinctive with Dostoevsky: many of his characters seem driven by some inner compulsion to make extensive confessions to enemies and friends, seemingly without discrimination. This adds to the intensive atmosphere of the novels.

Dostoevsky as psychologist attracts attention perhaps first of all by the intensity of the relationships of his characters. Yet there seems to be no necessity of laying this phenomenon to a Russian quality which lessens the worth

of the work for the English-speaking world. If there is a national difference here, it is certainly one of degree rather than kind and serves merely to heighten the effect of universal principles.

The interest of Dostoevsky in criminal and abnormal people is the basis of his greatest contribution to psychological fiction. But many charge that this interest makes him a morbid and unhealthy influence. On the contrary, it inspires him to search out the virtue and normality of souls that have been dismissed by others as hopeless and dark.

Many of the criminals of Dostoevsky are "possessed" to one degree or another - that is, they are victims of the destructive influence of atheistic nihilism. Verhovensky typifies the worst evils of the revolutionists, and is the only man among them for whom one feels almost no sympathy. The rest of the nihilists meet with human conflicts. Shatov wins the reader's love and pity, and Kirillov, the man who kills himself to become God, arouses compassion if not love. Nikolay Stavrogin is one of the most diabolical of the novelist's criminals, yet his worst crimes are plainly the result of a perversion which he cannot help. Thus the criminal becomes inextricable from the mass of the abnormals. There are suicide figures, like Svidrigaïlov and Smerdyakov, whose nihilism has left them no alternative to suicide; and there are double characters, like Ivan and Raskolnikov, who must suffer the tortures of internal

war between cold intellect and normal love of life. But all these are caught by nihilism.

In Dmitri, Pavel Pavlovitch, and Rogozhin are found entirely different causes for crime. These men are more easily understood by the world in general. They are led to intend, attempt, and commit murder because of intense passion. None of these men is entirely bad. That is what Dostoevsky wants to show the world probably more than any other one thing: that no man is just bad, but is bad for a certain reason, in a certain way, and to a certain degree. Furthermore, he usually needs help, not punishment, from the world. The greatest punishment of the criminal lies within himself.

Not all of Dostoevsky's characters are criminal or even abnormal, although a good many of them are. In the non-criminal figures there is a range of abnormality so wide that it includes the little mental quirks of the apparently normal and thus obliterates any definite line of demarcation between the abnormal and the normal. There is so much sense in the idiot, Marya Timofyevna, of The Possessed. On the other hand, Myshkin, probably Dostoevsky's greatest hero, is constantly accused of being an idiot, and does in the end become one. If any one character can be said to represent the fundamental idea of Dostoevsky, it is certainly Myshkin of The Idiot, not the more perfect but less vital Alyosha of The Brothers Karamazov. All of The Double is devoted to the development of insanity through an alter ego. A Gentle Spirit is the story of a man who

has the abnormal desire to torture himself and his wife by trying to defer love. In The Eternal Husband even the man who is supposed to be normal is cought by the novelist at a time of his life when he is suffering from depression and hypochondria. These are the people who interest Dostoevsky.

While the women in general are not so strong as characters, they too show their creator's line of interest. Most of the "respectable" heroines are hysterics, while the mistresses and prostitutes appear stronger, although frequently the victims of mild perversion or madness. And in the gentle Sonia of Crime and Punishment is seen more strength than in all the rest of the more intellectual characters.

In the range of abnormality of his figures, and in the mixture in a single person of good and bad, sanity and depravity, Dostoevsky has done much to make the world realize that humanity is graded in fine shades and that there is no human being who is not interesting. He has vastly extended the bounds of the psychological novel and of human compassion.

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